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Wednesday, 24 September 2014, 6 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kutesa .... (Uganda)

The meeting was called to order at 6.20 p.m.

Address by Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of South Africa.

Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Zuma: I should like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and your country, Uganda, on assuming, on behalf of the continent of Africa, the responsibilities of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. The theme that you have chosen for this general debate and the sixty-ninth session, namely, “Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda”, is timely and most appropriate.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) galvanized and mobilized the international community and the United Nations in a manner never seen before. We have good stories to tell about the journey of the past 15 years of implementing the MDGS. In Africa, we seized the opportunity and adopted the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), our sociodevelopment blueprint. The African Union’s Vision 2063 will, together with NEPAD and other socioeconomic development programmes, be the cornerstone and foundation of Africa’s development agenda going forward. South Africa has also made significant progress in achieving the MDGs. Reducing by half the number of people earning less than a dollar a day has been achieved, while the proportion of those experiencing hunger has also been halved. South Africa has attained Goal 2, namely, to provide access to primary education for all.

By official international indicators, South Africa is also doing well on MDG 3 to promote and empower women. South Africa has recorded impressive progress through the expansion of its health infrastructure and improved access to health services for all South Africans.

On the reduction of child mortality, MDG 4, and the improvement of maternal health, MDG 5, significant progress has also been recorded, but more work remains to be done. In fact. more work remains worldwide to fully achieve those goals, especially in the developing world. We have to confront the underlying root causes that continue to make it impossible for our people to have a better life.

In spite of the progress that we have made thus far, reports continue to show that Africa is lagging behind in the attainment of some of the MDGs. It is for that reason that we appreciate the crafting of a post-2015 global development agenda that will carry forward the unfinished business of the MDGs. The post-2015 global

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development agenda will provide a frame of reference for our collective agreement on what has to be done. We reiterate that developed countries should be reliable partners and meet their commitments to development goals, such as contributing 0.7 per cent of their gross national income towards official development assistance. We say that because it does not matter what the great Organization has achieved in the past six decades if we do not deal comprehensively with the scourge of poverty, unemployment and diseases. The poor of the world will then consider everything done to have been a failure. Indeed, we would have failed in our duty if we succeed in preventing another world war but continue to have children dying of malnutrition and treatable diseases.

The recent outbreak of Ebola in some West African States and the number of lives that have been unnecessarily lost provide a clear example of the challenges that developing countries continue to contend with. We believe that Ebola would have been contained within a few days had the outbreak been in the developed world. But now it has become a pandemic that threatens the economies of affected African States.

The outbreak has thus exposed the challenges resulting from lack of capacity, lack of infrastructure and other limited resources in Africa. We are pleased that the United Nations, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, is deploying a mission to coordinate efforts to combat the virus. South Africa stands ready to continue to provide whatever resources we have at our disposal to assist the people and Governments of our sister countries of Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone. We add our voice in calling for more resources to be deployed so as to ensure that the virus is contained.

The role of the United Nations in supporting the struggles of self-determination and freedom has been remarkable. South Africa is a shining example. Twenty years ago, President Nelson Mandela thanked all nations for support from this very podium when South Africa was readmitted to the United Nations as a free and democratic State. We are reminded of that fact on this important day, which is National Heritage Day in my country.

Since 1994, South Africa has made significant progress in transforming the apartheid State into a democratic one, founded on the values of human dignity, non-discrimination, non-racialism and non-sexism, the rule of law and universal adult suffrage, as enshrined in the Constitution. Given our history and heritage, we are mindful of our historic and moral responsibility in the global struggle against racism, racial discrimination and other intolerances. We will, in this regard, continue to be at the forefront of efforts to eliminate all forms of racism, racial discrimination and any other intolerance, including xenophobia and anti-Semitism.

The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action remain the primary framework adopted by a United Nations conference in the fight against racism. We will continue to support the struggles for freedom and self-determination, including the struggles of the peoples of Palestine and Western Sahara, who continue to experience occupation and colonialism of different forms. The people of Cuba also hold a special place in our hearts because of that country's sacrifice for African freedom. We will therefore continue to support their struggle for economic liberation.

While the United Nations has done remarkably well in supporting self-determination, when it celebrates 70 years of existence next year, this body may be found wanting by the people of Palestine. The Israeli-Palestine question is one of the oldest items on the United Nations agenda, but progress remains elusive. In the past few months in particular, the world has witnessed a devastating conflict that left a humanitarian crisis of shocking proportions. People in Palestine were left homeless, with no medical facilities, no safe drinking water, bereaved and having to care for the wounded after a trail of destructive military actions by Israel.

South Africa has condemned the actions of both Israel and Hamas, and we have called for an immediate cessation of hostilities. Our strongly held view is that there can be no military solution to the Israeli-Palestinian question. We should all remain committed to the two-State solution, based on the 1967 borders, with Palestine and Israel coexisting side by side in peace.

Of concern in this matter has been the helplessness displayed by the United Nations, especially the Security Council during the current conflict. The United Nations has the moral authority and legitimacy to unite the world in promoting the quest for peace, justice and self-determination for the people of Palestine, while addressing whatever security concerns Israel may have. This body must play its role without fear or favour and be a beacon for all who suffer oppression in the world.

Let me reiterate that the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations next year provides an opportunity for us seriously to reflect on the need to reform this august body, moving beyond words to action. Ten years ago, world leaders celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of the United Nations agreed on the need for reform of the Security Council in particular. The decision remains valid and must be implemented. When we convene here next year, in the seventieth year of the United Nations, we should be able to adopt a concrete programme that will guide us towards a strengthened United Nations and a reformed Security Council. Some contentious aspects of the United Nations system, including the power of veto and the exclusion of regions such as Africa from the Security Council, are some of the critical matters that cannot be ignored in the quest for transformation.

Among the achievements of the Organization in its recent history is the cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations, particularly since the formation of the African Union Peace and Security Architecture. In this regard, the full implementation of Security Council resolutions 1809 (2008) and 2033 (2012), on cooperation between the United Nations and regional organizations, particularly the African Union, remains crucial. Progress has been made in a number of areas where this cooperation is in place, for example in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The two affected subregional organizations, the Southern African Development Community and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, continue to take significant strides with the support of the United Nations.

This body celebrated the formation of a new State of South Sudan not long ago. Recent developments and the ongoing conflict in South Sudan have resulted in loss of life and other dire humanitarian consequences. We will continue to contribute as much as we can to finding solutions working with the African Union and this body. South Sudan should not be allowed to regress.

Next year marks 20 years since the the Fourth World Conference on Women adopted the Beijing Platform for Action. The anniversary provides an opportunity for the United Nations and the international community to reflect and take forward the struggle for the emancipation of women from all forms of discrimination.

Last December, the world descended on South Africa to pay last respects to our beloved Madiba. Those who did not come to South Africa honoured Madiba in various ways. We will continue to work with the world to promote Madiba's legacy and passion for justice, freedom, equality and human rights. We are grateful to the General Assembly and the President of the Assembly at the sixty-eighth session for the decision to establish the United Nations Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela Prize that will be awarded to an outstanding individual who will have demonstrated a commitment to the aims, objectives and principles of the United Nations Charter. The Prize is a great testament to the outstanding individual that Madiba was and will always be.

As we recommit to the Millennium Development Goals, let me once again borrow from the words of Madiba uttered on his historic inauguration day in 1994 when he said:

> "We understand it still that there is no easy road to freedom. We know it well that none of us acting alone can achieve success. We must therefore act together as a united people, for national reconciliation, for nation building, for the birth of a new world. Let there be justice for all. Let there be peace for all. Let there be work, bread, water and salt for all. Let each know that for each the body, the mind and the soul have been freed to fulfil themselves."

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of South Africa for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jacob Zuma, President of the Republic of South Africa, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Didier Burkhalter, President of the Swiss Confederation

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Swiss Confederation.

Mr. Didier Burkhalter, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Didier Burkhalter, President of the

Swiss Confederation, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Burkhalter (*spoke in French*):

> "A world in which people know how to solve their problems in peace without violence; a world of freedom and mutual respect; a world where all young people can look forward to finding work that allows them to live a happy life."

That, in his own words, is the world that a young man from my country would like to see. His name is Damian Vogt. He is in this Hall and represents Switzerland's youth at the United Nations. This week we work here together to make that world a reality.

A little more than a year ago, another young person stood in this very place and addressed the world. She said:

(*spoke in English*)

> "I speak not for myself, but for all girls and boys ... Those who have fought for their rights: their right to live in peace; their right to be treated with dignity; their right to equality of opportunity; their right to be educated."

(*spoke in French*)

The entire world still remembers the words of Malala Yousafzai. The entire world still remembers her courage. What a difference in the lives that Malala and Damian have known. What a difference between going to school only at the risk of your life and going to school as a right — the right to a better life. And yet, Malala and Damian, like millions of other young people around the globe, want exactly the same thing: peace, human dignity, freedom and equality, an education, and an opportunity to work. The youth of today have a right to expect from all of us, we who represent the nations, that we truly will be united in our commitment to do everything within our power to place in their hands tomorrow a world where humanity is synonymous with security, freedom and prosperity.

It is a century now since the outbreak of the First World War, and 75 years since the beginning of the Second World War. The memory of those cataclysmic events imposes a duty on humankind to work towards greater security and freedom, to bring about the conditions for prosperity, and to become an Organization of genuinely united nations that is effective as a true assembly of States at the service of the people. Here at the heart of the United Nations, Switzerland wishes to do its part by making the following twin objectives a priority: strengthening international security and reforming the United Nations.

The security challenges are immense. At no time since the Second World War has humankind seen so many people displaced. More than 50 million men, women and children have been torn from their homes. The story of each and every one of them is a human tragedy. Caught up in this current of insecurity are also 75 million young people who, without work, face a future without prospects. We are talking about one young person in 10 in the world, and in certain regions one in two. Worse still, in ever more regions throughout the globe there are waves of instability assailing the rule of international law and, in particular the principles of humanitarian law, which are being ignored, violated, and swept away in the deluge.

This is extremely worrisome in the Middle East, above all in Syria and Iraq. Switzerland condemns in the strongest terms the brutal acts of the self-proclaimed Islamic State and the groups that have allied themselves with it. Islam can, and must, like other religions, be a messenger of peace, humanity and fraternity. As for the nations, they can and must be truly united as a constant reminder at all times and in all places of the supremacy of law over force.

Where serious violations occur, investigations must be carried out. Here, the independent commissions of inquiry play an essential role, especially that of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, to allow for genuine reconciliation and lasting peace. Switzerland and 60 other States have requested the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court. We have also committed ourselves to an increase in our humanitarian aid in the region. The crisis in Syria must be dealt with as a whole, and we call on the parties to return to the negotiating table and to work towards a political solution.

Switzerland calls on the Iraqi Government to ensure accountability. It joins the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in calling on Iraq to consider accession to the Rome Statute.

With regard to all forms of extremism that can lead to acts of terrorism, it is important also to address their root causes to show young people that violence holds out no promise for the future. The establishment in Geneva of the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund was an important step in this direction.

The world in 2014 has witnessed a conjunction of many crises — in the Middle East, in the Maghreb, in Africa, and also in Europe, where war returned this year with the crisis in Ukraine. This situation weakens the security of the entire continent.Violations of the Helsinki principles and of international law, whether in the form of an illegal annexation of territory, such as that of Crimea by Russia, or of military incursions in eastern Ukraine, demand a firm response from the international community. But such a response must also be balanced, leaving room for dialogue and cooperation so that open discussion remains possible. To simply isolate Russia from the rest of Europe will not solve any problems and will only create more, in Europe and beyond. Stability can be restored in Ukraine and in Europe if we succeed in resolving this crisis by working with Russia, not against it.

That stability will be all the more sustainable if the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) — of which Switzerland this year holds the chairmanship — is able to re-establish a firm basis for security cooperation between the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions. Switzerland, in its capacity as current chair of the OSCE, fully supports the vital work of the contact group for Ukraine and Russia. We are currently taking steps to increase funding for the special civil monitoring mission, that will also require additional support from the participating States, and we welcome the excellent cooperation with the United Nations.

In today's unstable world, Switzerland has made an active commitment to achieving greater security by focusing its efforts there where it can make the greatest contribution — the prevention of conflicts. The prevention of violence means, first and foremost making certain that a proper education is available to all and that there are opportunities for every young person. We welcome the Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative. Switzerland is working to promote education through massive open online courses and seeks to encourage the development of dual vocational training, combining school studies with on-the-job apprenticeships. This calls for a joint commitment on the part of the State and the social partners.

In addition, preventing tensions from arising requires knowing how to give everyone a voice. At the heart of Switzerland's history lies a willingness to share power, to engage in direct dialogue with minorities, and to distribute authority between central and local government — an emphasis on consultation rather than on confrontation. In order to better prevent and manage tensions in the world, we must strengthen the mediation capacities of both the United Nations and regional security organizations, particularly those of the largest among them, the OSCE.

Switzerland has decided to augment its contributions to international development and humanitarian cooperation. In the coming year we will be allocating funds for this purpose amounting to the equivalent of 0.5 per cent of our gross national income. In other words, to help the neediest inhabitants of our planet, each person in Switzerland will be contributing a little over one dollar every day.

The post-2015 process provides us with the chance to transform the world's challenges into opportunities. There must be a single agenda for universal sustainable development, with shared objectives. We must all act to ensure that they are truly achieved. If all nations are genuinely united, it lies within our power to make certain that no one in the world need face a future of destitute poverty. It is within our power to make certain that the creation of jobs and wealth, and thus also companies doing business contribute to the development of human rights and help to foster respect for the limited resources of this Earth.

Today there are crises that cannot wait for the outcome of discussions on an agenda, no matter how sustainable it may be. Switzerland has increased its humanitarian commitment to the fight against the horror of Ebola. Swiss-based research centres, among the best in the world, are working to arrange for the clinical testing of vaccines. Similarly, we must also do all we can every day to protect the world's youth from the horrors of war. The place of children and young people is in school and with their families and not on the battlefield. Switzerland is intensifying its efforts to provide better health protection for women, especially young girls, and has also launched an action plan to combat the phenomenon of child soldiers, who are being deprived ofthe right to be simply children.

In order to meet these challenges we will need not only the common will of the United Nations but also an organization that functions in an effective, transparent, and democratic fashion. "We the peoples of the United Nations" are the opening words of the United Nations Charter. They are a reminder that the United Nations must first listen to and serve the people of this world.

In concrete terms, this means that it must strengthen bodies that are dedicated to the prevention of conflicts. Switzerland applauds the initiative of the Secretary-General to strengthen the commitment of the United Nations to human rights, particularly in sensitive regions. My country has launched an appeal for the allocation of additional funds for those important activities.

There is also a need to strengthen the United Nations special political missions to prevent conflicts and reinforce the activity of the Peacebuilding Commission. The United Nations must devote all its energy to its work in the field to serve the people. It must avoid getting lost in an administrative maze. Together with eight other countries, Switzerland has commissioned a group of experts to draft recommendations for the reform of planning and budgeting processes.

Lastly, the ability of the United Nations to be effective in dealing with the challenges it faces depends on the legitimacy it enjoys as well as its ability to be transparent and inclusive in the Security Council. The permanent members ought not to use their veto to block action designed to prevent or put an end to genocide, crimes against humanity, or war crimes. Switzerland welcomes the French initiative for a voluntary agreement by the five permanent members to restrain their veto power in cases of mass atrocities.

One day, many years ago, a young man travelling across the north of Italy was horrified by the suffering he witnessed on the battlefield at Solferino in the 1800s. The young man's name was Henri Dunant. With the help of local women, he cared for the wounded soldiers. Later, when he returned home to Geneva, he dedicated himself to raising public awareness of the tragedy that had taken place. Through his commitment, the Red Cross Movement was born. Through his persistence, the first Geneva Convention was signed, 150 years ago in 1864. This document — which I am holding up here and will give to the President of the General Assembly — is a reproduction of the original, in which States committed themselves to providing assistance to wounded soldiers and ensuring respect for humanitarian principles. Thus, international humanitarian law was born.

Yet today, 150 years later, humanitarian law is too often violated or ignored. Switzerland and the International Committee of the Red Cross were given a mandate to consult States and to issue recommendations. We will present next year a specific proposal to strengthen respect for humanitarian law and to put in place some joint machinery and an institutional framework. For the past 150 years, the spirit of Geneva, the spirit of international law, has shone forth throughout the world like a beacon, a place of peace, a home to humanitarianism and a refuge for humankind. Geneva is a gift, both for Switzerland and for the world, and we would like to strengthen its role further by finding useful solutions for humankind. Like Malala and Damian, Henri Dunant dreamed of peace, freedom and prosperity for the world. His story — the story of the Red Cross and the Geneva Conventions — is a message of commitment. The action of each one of us can make a difference.

In a few days, Switzerland will rename one of the highest mountain peaks in the Alps. It will henceforth be known as Dunant Peak, after Henri Dunant, the first recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. Here, where the nations come together, we have the power to move mountains, as long as we stand united, working together to make the dreams of Damian and Malala and all young people in the world a reality. We owe them a better world. We are capable of building that world together, if we find the will to work as nations truly united in dialogue and action — united nations, whose Governments draw their strength from the people, for the people; united nations who draw their inspiration from the youth for the youth.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Swiss Confederation for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Didier Burkhalter, President of the Swiss Confederation, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Chad.

Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Deby Itno (*spoke in French*): The sixty-ninth session offers us a theme that invites us to deepen exchanges on the development model that we want for the world post-2015. The theme, "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda", is perfectly in line with the theme of the sixty-eighth session, "The post-2015 development agenda: setting the stage".

At previous sessions, we have acknowledged that development through the achievement the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) has not produced the expected results for many States. Among the main causes for this are the weakness of solidarity in financing the Goals; their poor adaptation to the concerns and realities of Africa; and the many global financial, food, environmental and security crises that arose. The unanimously welcomed drafting of a post-2015 agenda gave us the opportunity to review the MDGs in greater depth and to respond relevantly. Africa, for its part, has adopted a Common Position that requires the adherence of all States and their partners. This Common African Position is part of the Africa Vision 2063. That is why my country, Chad, fully supports it and hopes that this approach will figure prominently in the post-2015 agenda.

Unfortunately, we note that on the eve of the important post-2015 meeting, the same security risks remain. Armed conflicts and the phenomenon of terrorism are becoming persistant threats in several areas of Africa. They are aggravated by the migratory phenomenon that deprives our continent, Africa, of its workforce. We must therefore join our efforts to bring adequate and energetic responses to these phenomena, which dangerously compromise the future of our continent.

I take this occasion to hail the upsurge of solidarity that we are witnessing on the part of the international community in combating terrorism and underdevelopment. Africa remains in favour of various strategies for security and development in the Sahel initiated by the United Nations, the European Union and many other organizations. We hope that the implementation of these programmes will be effective so as to allow our continent to effectively combat these ongoing phenomena.

Beyond international support, these security challenges require African countries to take their security into their own hands by implementing laws that will ensure security at the national, regional and continental levels. The countries of the Sahel — Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, the Niger and Chad — have mobilized through the Group of Five countries of the Sahel to combine their efforts in building a strong system of resilience, good governance, security and peace. It is well known that the security of one country or region is directly linked to its development, that of its neighbours, and thereby to that of the entire continent.

The terrorism summit convened by the African Union Peace and Security Council, over which we presided on 2 September in Nairobi, was a part of these constant efforts. It sought to consider in depth the terrorist threat and to agree specific and concrete measures to consolidate the efficacy of collective actions against this scourge. The summit also gave us the opportunity to highlight our solidarity with Kenya in particular, and more generally with the East African region, which is facing the threat of the terrorist Al-Shabaab group.

The decision to create such mechanisms as the African Capacity for Immediate Response to Crises or the African regional force for the Sahel-Sahara and Central Africa, was the fruit of this regional and continental resolve to respond appropriately to terrorism, which is progressively gaining ground in Africa. We call on the countries of the Lake Chad Basin Commission to take the necessary measures to bring the joint multinational force into operation in order to combat the terrorist activities of Boko Haram.

With respect to conflict resolution, Chad continues to contribute to peace and reconciliation in Africa. This goodwill is borne out by the organization on its territory, at Amdjarass in the north, of a forum of peace and reconciliation between the warring brothers of Darfur. Chad welcomes the holding of the Brazzaville forum on reconciliation and inclusive dialogue between Central African brothers, where it played an active part in seeking solutions to Central African crises.

My country welcomes the inter-Malian dialogue towards a definitive return to peace and security in that country. It welcomes the reconciliation process under way in South Sudan to persuade the South Sudanese to take up the peace pipe. We are convinced that sincere dialogue and surpassing ourselves are virtues that can assist in resolving these issues. My country will continue to support this process of dialogue and reconciliation.

Regarding the new Libya — a country that has barely begun to exist as a homogenous entity after the fall of the Al-Qadhafi's regime and his assassination — the violence has intensified and the people live in constant fear. Libya's neighbours are striving to assist that brotherly country to recover its stability. The entire international community is called upon to act on the severe security situation in that country. Libyan brothers of different political and social beliefs must understand that peace can come only from the Libyans themselves. They must therefore resolutely commit to a political settlement, the only proper path to ensure peace, unity and territorial integrity for Libya.

Chad, a neighbouring country of Libya, the Central African Republic, the Sudan and Nigeria, is hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons who have fled armed conflicts or terrorist threats. Since 2003, we have welcomed more than 500,000 refugees from these neighbouring countries and more than 200,000 Chadians repatriated from Libya and the Central African Republic for security reasons, including displaced Chadians. A national plan for global response developed by the Government and its technical and financial partners has been adopted and is being implemented, but it requires the financial and material support of the international community.

These various conflict situations are compounded by other, no less important challenges such as poverty, underdevelopment and illnesses. I note in particular the severe Ebola crisis affecting certain countries on the African continent, ravaging populations and gravely affecting the economies concerned. Chad will make its financial contributions to these countries. The international community must act, and act quickly, in a coordinated manner as the Ebola virus knows no borders. I commend the upsurge of solidarity on the part of the international community in containing the spread of this scourge.

Beyond Africa, we call for a peaceful resolution to the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria, and between Israel and Palestine, to name but a few. On Palestine specifically, we feel that the disproportionate use of force and the human and material damage incurred in Gaza are unacceptable and challenge the human conscience. It is extremely urgent to find a solution to this conflict, which has lasted for far too long. We therefore call on all parties for restraint and dialogue in order to reach a just, global and lasting solution.

Regarding the embargo to which Cuba has been subject for many years, we once again reiterate our call for it to be lifted, pure and simple.

Peace, stability and development are intrinsically linked to respect for laws and universal shared values, of which justice is the basis. Nevertheless, we note with regret that these universal principles are not often respected, especially by the powerful of this world. This is the case for the International Criminal Court, which, instead of being neutral, impartial and independent, seems more to practise double standards and only pursues the weak. Some 90 per cent of indictees are Africans.

The debate on the reform of the Security Council must be concluded, taking into account the interests and concerns of all States so that it reflects the actual makeup of the world. It is unjust that a billion inhabitants live in the only continent without a permanent representative in that organ.

At the national level Chad has a national development plan for 2013-2015 and a national programme for food security which seek to ensure resilient and emerging development by 2025, supported by sustainable and diversified sources of growth that create added value and employment. The plan ensures that each Chadian has appropriate access to basic social services, decent housing and to adequate training opportunities. I again thank all our partners who announced their participation in financing these two programmes at the Paris conference in June.

In order to promote a serene climate in national political life Chad has implemented mechanisms for political governance, the latest of which is the national framework for political dialogue created in April 2013. This mechanism is better adapted to current political events as it includes civil society along with political parties. These mechanisms have led to stability conducive to economic and social development in a country where challenges remain considerable.

To improve governance, Chad has adhered to the monitoring mechanism of the African Union and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative. That adherence clearly demonstrates our resolve to manage our national resources in complete transparency. Chad will continue to work to consolidate the rule of law and good governance through substantial reforms of its institutions, to combat unemployment by creating jobs for youth, and to combat poverty and food insecurity.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Chad for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Idriss Deby Itno, President of the Republic of Chad, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Estonia.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Ilves: In the 364 days since I last had the honour to address this Assembly, the world has changed dramatically. We have seen a profound change in the global security situation. We see unprecedented threats to peace and security in post-Second World War Europe and the world, while terrorism, climate change, human rights violations and the spread of the Ebola virus continue to be global challenges.

We need a concerted effort to achieve peace and stability in Europe and the Middle East, and to restore the credibility of international law. No circumstances can ever justify terrorism in any form. By signing United Nations anti-terrorism conventions States have promised to prevent and investigate terrorist crimes as well as to refrain from supporting or tacitly tolerating those crimes.

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) poses a serious threat to the people of Iraq and Syria as well as the broader Middle East. This terrorist organization executes prisoners, kills civilians and commits genocidal acts against religious and national minorities. Its brutality, barbarous crimes and extreme ideology threaten all of humanity. It challenges the universal human values enshrined in United Nations documents. We must stop the terrorists. Estonia commends all global efforts to fight the ISIL and other terrorist organizations and stands ready to contribute to those efforts. I should like to welcome the adoption today of Security Council resolution 2178 (2014), on foreign terrorist fighters.

A quarter of a century ago in the annus mirabilis 1989, Europe and the democratic world celebrated an historical sea change. The Berlin Wall fell. The Cold War that had divided the world into hostile camps for half a century ended. This year we should celebrate an anniversary of the triumph of freedom and democracy. Instead, 2014 has turned out to be a year when the international order as we have known it since the cold war, has been violated and put in doubt. Cynical geopolitics in international relations has once again come to the fore. The international agreements upon which the stability of the post-Second World War security architecture relied, have been compromised.

Let me recall what we have collectively agreed upon. The Charter of the United Nations of 1945 declares:

> "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state".

In the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, all trans-Atlantic countries agreed not to use force to change borders or challenge the political independence of any State. States agreed to regard one another's frontiers as inviolable; to refrain from making each other's territory the object of military organized occupation. No such occupation or acquisition would be recognized as legal. In the 1990 Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) Charter of Paris for a New Europe, all signatories, from Vancouver to Vladivostok, agreed to "fully recognize the freedom of States to choose their own security arrangements".

By annexing Crimea and invading Eastern Ukraine, one of the signatories has violated all of these agreements. Thus, we find ourselves in a completely new and unforeseen security environment. We must enforce the fundamental agreements upon which our peace and security rely.

The Ukrainian crisis is not solely a conflict between two countries. It is not even solely a European issue. If instead of agreements and laws raw brute force will apply in international relations; if changing State borders by force will become an accepted norm, then the stability of the whole world is threatened. As President Obama said this morning, "This is a vision of the world in which might makes right" (*A/69/PV.6, p. 11*). And he added, "We believe that right makes might" (*ibid.*). So does Estonia. We believe that too.

Such developments must be firmly condemned. The international community cannot leave Crimea as it is now. We cannot accept frozen conflicts created for geopolitical ends. Referendums that are in agreement with international law cannot be arranged in two weeks in the presence of foreign armed forces. The results of such referendums cannot be considered valid. Independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity must remain the fundamental rights of States and nations. That includes their right to direct their own future and to choose their allies, as stated in the CSCE Paris Charter. Such free choices by sovereign nations cannot be accepted as an excuse for aggression. However, it was not Ukraine's wish even to choose its security arrangements that was used as justification for aggression. Its mere desire to enhance trade and political relations with the European Union, which is not a security arrangement, led to the country's dismemberment.

What can we do, then, to restore the validity of international agreements? There were warning signs of current events in Ukraine earlier. Alarm bells rang already six years ago in Georgia, but few bothered to hear the wake-up call. We must take, therefore, conflict prevention more seriously. We must support States in their choice of democracy, the rule of law and human rights and decisions that follow from that. These recent developments force us seriously to reconsider the role of the United Nations. How can one of the fundamental goals of the United Nations, global peace and security, be promoted when basic international agreements are ignored, State borders are changed, and territories are annexed through force?

We cannot ignore that the Security Council has been paralysed as international justice has been manipulated and multiple crises have escalated. The Security Council needs to be reformed. Its work methods and principles must be revised, with special attention on the openness, accountability and transparency of its processes. The permanent members of the Security Council bear enormous responsibility in guaranteeing international peace. No permanent member should abuse the veto to circumvent the principles of the United Nations Charter.

Human rights remain the most cherished of values of the United Nations. Unfortunately, respect for human rights can still not be assumed to be the norm. We cannot accept arguments that for some countries human rights do not apply for cultural reasons. Human rights, as stated in the Universal Declaration, are universal, inalienable and inviolable. They are based on the humanity and dignity of each and every person.

No peace or justice, stability or security can be guaranteed unless the basic rights of all human beings are respected and protected in every country by all Governments. We must, moreover, pay special attention to the rights of the most vulnerable groups. Women's rights must be protected everywhere. It is crucial that empowering women and action against gender-based violence be implemented in accordance with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). We must respect the rights of children and minorities, as well as those of indigenous people. We must care for people with special needs.

Free speech remains a crucial right. Some States have made efforts to stop the free flow of information on the Internet and to divide cyberspace along State borders. This we must avoid. The Internet must remain a universal platform for the uninhibited exchange of information. Estonia is proud to be a founding member of the Freedom Online Coalition, a community of 23 nations committed to promoting free speech online, and the multi-stakeholder model of a free and open Internet. It is a global initiative that brings together Governments, non-governmental organizations, entrepreneurs and think tanks.

In April, the Freedom Online Coalition gathered in our capital and issued the Tallinn Agenda, a statement expressing our strongly shared conviction that all people are entitled to the same rights and freedoms, online as well as offline. This is not a lifestyle question. The Internet is a driver of economic growth and a key tool for development. Since the 1990s it has blossomed into a global network of nearly three billion users. Most of the next billion Internet users will come from developing countries. The United Nations post-2015 development agenda should recognize the importance of new technologies and e-services as a major contribution to the security and prosperity of the world. As we grow more dependent on digital services in our daily lives, we become more vulnerable to cyberattacks. Cyber security is essential, not just for protecting rights, but also for economic prosperity. Cyberattacks can paralyse crucial services or infrastructure. They can cause enormous economic damage. Limiting access to, or censoring the contents of the Internet, however, is not the answer to cyber insecurity.

Achieving sustainable development is essential in order to tackle some of the challenges we face. Even in the current fragile security environment, we must take care of the future of the planet and work towards a world where everyone can live a dignified life, free from poverty, violence and exclusion. In today's interdependent world, this is hard to achieve without peace and stability.

The world today also faces the outbreak of a deadly virus. This is no longer a local concern of a few countries. Ebola has become an international public health emergency. Despite efforts already made by Governments and international organizations the outbreak races ahead. We support the efforts of the Global Ebola Response Coalition tasked to contain and stop the spread of the virus.

Climate change is already an existential threat to some countries. It has a dramatic impact on their living conditions and their security. The small island developing States are most vulnerable. If we do not act soon enough other countries will be threatened as well. We must see this problem globally, not just from the perspective of short-term national or economic interest.

The risks of conflict, violence, insecurity, financial and economic collapse, climate change, lack of resources and natural disasters are inextricably intertwined and need to be addressed comprehensively. The new post-2015 development agenda must be truly universal. Sustainable development goals are best addressed together. Progress in these fields will be guaranteed by good governance, transparency of decision-making and low corruption. Effective and accountable institutions are powerful enablers of sustainable development, and modern digital technology helps us to create them. In Estonia, we have developed an e-governance system that increases transparency and limits corruption. We have been sharing the system with all interested partners and we continue to be willing to do so.

Since 8 May 1945, we have believed that we had been freed of certain ideological demons for good. Yet today we see the return of long-discredited ideas dating back to 1938. The existence of co-ethnics abroad has been used as a justification to annex territory. This is in 2014, not in 1938. So, too, we have seen a return to the ideologies of hatred, lies and propaganda. We must be clear in condemning extreme nationalism, homophobia, xenophobia and religious extremism. We need to recall and reaffirm the values that the United Nations was created to protect. The United Nations, a unique global instrument of security and peace, must succeed where the League of Nations once failed.

Let us not forget that 75 years ago, on 23 August 1939, a pact was signed between Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Union of Soviet Socialist Republics to divide Eastern Europe into their spheres of influence. A week later, on 1 September, Hitler attacked Poland. On 17 September, two and a half weeks later, Hitler's erstwhile ally, the Soviet Union, also attacked Poland, and the Second World War had begun.

The date of 31 August this year marked 20 years since the occupation forces left Estonia — troops that were there as a result of that same Stalin-Hitler pact. Yet just a few days later on 5 September, an Estonian police officer was abducted by foreign security services on Estonian territory and taken by force to Moscow, where he is still being held in the infamous Lefortovo prison.

We cannot allow anyone ever to divide countries into spheres of influence. The community of nations is only secure when its smallest members can feel secure. We cannot and will not accept threats and intimidation in twenty-first century international relations. We cannot have peace, security or prosperity in Europe, or in the world, unless we again find a way to enforce and revalidate the agreements that we have all signed and are parties to.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Estonia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Obiang Nguema Mbasogo (*spoke in Spanish*): I bring with me to this session of the General Assembly greetings of peace, friendship and solidarity from the people of Equatorial Guinea and the full readiness of their Government to contribute to our common task of maintaining peace and stability throughout the world, and promoting the harmonious development of humankind.

Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your brilliant election to preside over the work of this sixty-ninth ordinary session of the General Assembly. Your well-deserved election is justified by the policy of peace, respect for the principles of international law and the promotion of development advocated by your country, the Republic of Uganda. Indeed, your decision to devote this session of the General Assembly to the theme "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda" is testament to Uganda's interest in overcoming the current problems of underdevelopment throughout the world.

Equatorial Guinea recognizes the relevance and importance of the topics to be debated at the two high-level meetings proposed for 2015 — one in February, to consider ways of implementing the post-2015 development agenda, and the other in March, on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

We also wish to convey our sincere appreciation and congratulations to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his outstanding work at the head of the global Organization in very difficult international circumstances marked by terrorism, piracy, mercenary activities and major epidemics affecting the world today. Indeed, this session of the General Assembly bears the heavy responsibility of finding solutions to the problems of the poverty and hunger prevalent throughout the world, violence and armed conflicts, terrorism, piracy and mercenary activity, and major epidemics, such as the recent Ebola epidemic that is now laying waste to some countries in Africa. Given Ebola's deadly effects and the lack of adequate resources to combat it, on the occasion of the award of the second UNESCO Equatorial Guinea International Prize for Research in Life Sciences, the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea announced a donation of $2 million to the World Health Organization to finance programmes to combat Ebola.

The United Nations will not be able to find solutions to these thorny problems unless the role of the General Assembly, which in recent years has grown routine, is strengthened and revitalized. The United Nations will never be able to find lasting solutions to these problems if the Security Council is not governed by rules that respect the spirit of democracy and international justice. Ultimately, the United Nations will not be able to find satisfactory solutions to these problems as long as the current system of the rule of force in international relations persists.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is therefore very concerned by the proliferation of acts of intervention that do not respect the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States. These interventions interrupt the process of genuine democracy in the affected countries in that they ignore the essential characteristics and idiosyncracies of those societies, thereby further fuelling divisions and the sociopolitical instability of nations. We must distinguish clearly between support for a genuine internal democratic process and interference perpetrated through pressures that lead to misunderstandings, intolerance, exclusion, resentment, hatred among citizens and fratricidal wars.

In Equatorial Guinea we say that democracy is not an imported product and cannot be designed in the offices of other countries. Democracy is shaped by the application of the positive values characterizing a society, and only the people are entitled to define the model that best suits them and to beat their own path towards their own development. With this as our vision, in 1982 the Republic of Equatorial Guinea adopted the theory of democratic experimentation, which gave our own citizens, through community councils, a hand in designing their own political development, the implementation of which has given rise to the current climate of peace, stability and economic prosperity through successive political reforms.

The latest of these reforms is making Equatorial Guinea a modern democratic State in which popular participation and representational politics are ensured at the highest possible level. The transfer of power is guaranteed by equal rights for all political options. Public affairs are administered with the utmost transparency, accountability and responsibility, and human rights are protected and monitored by reliable institutions.

In this spirit of ensuring the participation of all citizens of Equatorial Guineans in the management and administration of public affairs, our Government has extended an invitation to all political parties — those within the country and those in the diaspora alike — to attend a national dialogue that will be held in November as an opportunity to strengthen democracy in our country as a positive experience in our democratic experiment, which has yielded fruit since its inception in 1982.

Concurrently with this political process, and thanks to the peace and political stability that we have achieved, our Government has undertaken economic initiatives to develop our natural resources and position Equatorial Guinea as an economically emerging country by 2020. On behalf of the people of Equatorial Guinea, I wish to thank those countries that have been cooperating with my Government in developing our economic and trade relations, in particular the United States of America, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Cuba, France, Brazil, Russia and Morocco.

In conclusion, and with the fervent wish to see the United Nations recover its leading role in delivering peace, security and global development, I wish the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly every success.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.

Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rajapaksa: I congratulate you, Sir, on being elected as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. We wish you success and assure you of our fullest cooperation.

The theme for this session "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda", is timely. The world has undergone many changes since the United Nations was created, and since the year 2000 much progress has been made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. However, there are multiple challenges that still remain to be addressed. The moral and practical importance of creating an equitable world and a sustainable planet for this purpose cannot be ignored.

The Commonwealth, of which Sri Lanka is the current Chair-in-Office, accounts for more than one-quarter of the United Nations membership. In November 2013 the Commonwealth Heads of Government agreed in Colombo to contribute to the process of evolving the new post-2015 global development agenda. They have endorsed the central focus on the eradication of extreme poverty and reaffirmed commitments to sustainable development. The perspective on the post-2015 development agenda is based on shared values and principles contained in the Commonwealth Charter and individual experiences. The Commonwealth leaders encourage others to approach the forthcoming intergovernmental negotiations in a collaborative spirit to achieve a balanced post-2015 development agenda.

Reducing inequality within and among countries is one of the most transformative goals that have been proposed by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. We hope that this goal will serve to enhance the voice and representation of developing countries in decision-making. The post-2015 agenda must focus on implementation. Achieving the sustainable development goals would be impossible without the political will and dedication of all countries. It must be ensured that the failure of the developed countries to fulfil Millennium Goal 8 that called for a global partnership for development is not repeated.

In determining goals, countries must not be deprived of policy space to set their own domestic priorities. Instead of asking countries to reprioritize domestic spending, the focus should be on a strengthened partnership between developed and developing countries, backed by sincere commitment. That is essential for countries in the South to access financial resources and technology that are essential for capacity building. It is vital that we also address structural obstacles and political barriers that prevented the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, such as unfair trade and investment rules. Creating a supportive international economic environment, enhanced investment flows, including from multilateral development banks, and an open multilateral trading regime, are important.

The role of the United Nations in advancing international peace, security and prosperity is crucial in the contemporary world. However, in order to gain the confidence and good will of the international community as a whole, one of the essential requirements is consistency of standards across the board without any perception of selectivity or discrimination. It is in this context that the current functioning of the system needs examination in order to enhance its credibility. Human rights are used as a tool to implement motivated agendas with no understanding or appreciation of the complexity of issues in the countries concerned. Human rights should be recognized by all as a moral and ethical concept rather than as a political tool. External intervention without adequate consideration of the structures in a society and cultural traditions of countries where such intervention takes place, inevitably results in destabilization, which is very much in evidence today in most parts of the world.

Ms. Gunnarsdóttir (Iceland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Post-conflict Sri Lanka has also become an unfortunate victim of ill-conceived agendas of some in the Human Rights Council who pay scant regard to the substantial progress achieved by Sri Lanka in reconstruction, rehabilitation and reconciliation within a short span of five years. There is an obvious lack of balance and proportion in the manner in which my country is being targeted today, disregarding these significant achievements. That is in sharp contrast to the approach to deeply disturbing situations involving humanitarian emergencies elsewhere.

If multilateralism is to remain relevant and effective, reform of the institutions concerned is essential. To be successful this process must involve de-politicization of the United Nations systems and mechanisms and they must stop being a hostage to different forms of funding. United Nations bodies must find ways to work with governments through dialogue, greater understanding of situations, and cooperation, including assistance to strengthen national institutions. This approach, instead of strong-arm tactics, must form the heart of multilateral diplomacy in the search for sustainable solutions to global challenges.

The seventieth year of the United Nations in 2015 also marks the tenth anniversary of the 2005 World Summit where global leaders agreed to support early reform of the Security Council. Concrete results in this regard should be achieved next year at least.

Climate change is one of the defining challenges of our times. A robust global response needs to be arrived at in 2015 on the basis of equity and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

The increase in violence in the Middle East is deeply distressing. I reiterate Sri Lanka's support for the early realization of a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, existing within secure and recognized borders, side by side and at peace with Israel. We look forward to welcoming Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations at the earliest. The international community must assist Palestine to rebuild the country.

Sri Lanka firmly believes in the need for solidarity between Asia and Africa. Admiring the efforts of the people of Africa to achieve socioeconomic development, Sri Lanka has begun a process of reaching out to countries in Africa for an exchange of knowledge and expertise in areas of importance. The international community must strongly support the early eradication of deadly diseases in Africa.

Sri Lanka remains committed to supporting all multilateral efforts to counter terrorism deriving from extreme ideologies impacting on people across national frontiers. Terrorism continues to be a grave threat to the security and stability of nations throughout the globe. Having suffered at the hands of terrorism, Sri Lanka knows well its drastic impact on societies, communities and institutions founded on democratic traditions and ideals. The international community must strengthen multilateral action on terrorism, including the early finalization and adoption of the United Nations Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

Sri Lanka is also committed to supporting all multilateral efforts to counter terrorism financing, piracy and all forms of international organized crime. We wish to recall our appeal to the international community not to support terrorist groups in any way, either directly or indirectly. Sri Lanka expresses its concern regarding bombings that kill innocent civilians and even unborn children in many situations across the world.

Sri Lanka expresses deep concern regarding unilateral economic measures against developing countries and is a consistent supporter of the call of the General Assembly for an end to the unjust economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba. Unilateral sanctions of this nature, which impact on a country's innocent population, are unethical.

Despite being affected by terrorism, Sri Lanka has achieved most Millennium Development Goals. Sri Lanka has succeeded in being ranked ahead of all South Asian countries in the 2013 Human Development Index. Through the adoption of the National Development Strategy — the Mahinda Chinthana, or Vision for the Future — the Government of Sri Lanka embarked on an inclusive and rural-centric development programme. That involved bold policy decisions connected with macroeconomic management, revitalization of agriculture, infrastructure development, including roads and expressways, ports and airports, irrigation and water distribution, a strong telecommunication network and well-distributed urban and township development resulting in 7.8 per cent gross domestic product growth this year and per capita income of $3,280 in 2013. It is also a matter of deep satisfaction to recognize that the economic and political empowerment of the people of the North, supported by massive investment in infrastructure and livelihoods, have also contributed to this growth.

Sri Lanka's information technology literacy grew steadily from a mere 3 per cent in 2005 to almost 50 per cent in 2014. Sri Lanka's Nenasala Programme was awarded the prestigious Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Award as the best rural information technologyaccess programme in the world.

With the end of terrorism in May 2009, in keeping with my responsibilities to my people, large-scale post-conflict reconstruction, rehabilitation and resettlement initiatives were implemented in the north in a relatively short period of four years. Most importantly, democratic structures in the North have been re-established. Elections to the Northern Provincial Council were held in September 2013 after a lapse of 28 years, upholding the democratic tradition in Sri Lanka which has been consistently protected since 1931, the year we attained universal franchise.

I recall in this context the visit to Sri Lanka of the Secretary-General just a week after the conclusion of the conflict, when a new era of peace had dawned. That was a manifestation of the close cooperation between my country and the United Nations and our commitment to working together in the future.

We continue on a deeply satisfying and transformative journey in the interests of all the people of Sri Lanka. In carrying out this task we work in accordance with our traditional foreign policy of friendship towards all and enmity towards none. We hope that the international community will reciprocate and assist Sri Lanka in its domestic process of reconciliation and economic development without exerting undue pressure on us.

We have gained inspiration from the words of Gautama the Buddha who said that the purpose of all human endeavour must be to construct order out of chaos and harmony out of strife. True to these words of wisdom, the Government of Sri Lanka remains committed to its objective of pursuing the processes of reconciliation and nation building, undeterred by ill-motivated criticism.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa, President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nicolás Maduro Moros, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Nicolás Maduro Moros, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nicolás Maduro Moros, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Maduro Moros (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, as this is the first time that I am attending in my capacity as the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, I wish to thank the General Assembly, all its representative Governments and the various bodies of the United Nations system for the heartfelt tribute that was paid simultaneously at United Nations Headquarters in New York, in Geneva and other places in the world to an extraordinary human being, Commander Hugo Chávez, who always carried the banners of peace, equality and respect for our peoples. That is the first thing I wish to convey from my heart on behalf of the people of Venezuela and to recall and invoke his spirit of tackling imperialism and injustice.

We have had debates for several decades now on the need to reform the Organization, and various Presidents that have presided over the Assembly. This morning, I strongly reminded Presidents Dilma Rousseff, Cristina Fernández, Evo Morales Ayma and other Presidents of the Americas of the need to reorient, readjust and tweak the entire United Nations system. This system has been in place for 70 years since the end of the so-called Second World War, which took place in Europe and other parts of the world between 1939 and 1945.

The United Nations Charter is one of the most beautiful poems that we could ever read. It has well and truly become an instrument that has been set aside, overlooked and consistently flouted in terms of its fundamental objectives are concerned. The United Nations is an historic human experiment that has become a landmark because never before has humankind had a forum to meet to address issues of peace, affecting life and death, and to negotiate solutions to conflicts. After 7,000 years of civilization as we know it — a review of which reveals a history of empires and the ongoing battle to distribute the wealth and territory of the world — only with the establishment of this system in 1945 did we begin to get a glimpse of future light at the end of a long tunnel of battles, wars and global conflicts.

We call for the renewed relevance of the United Nations, above and beyond any criticism that may be levelled against it. Given the human importance of this institution, we insist on the need for an in-depth transformation, as Commander Hugo Chávez said on many occasions right here in this Hall. In his famous statements in defence of the causes of humankind, he stressed the need for a far-reaching democratic overhaul of the United Nations system. As President Jacob Zuma of our sister country South Africa said, we must democratize and overhaul the Security Council.

The role of the regions today is different from what it was in 1945. This is another world. The United Nations was born to deal with post-war reconstruction and the issues that had given rise to conflicts. The United Nations has to deal today with a multicentric, multipolar world of numerous actors, with emerging countries and regions that have their own thoughts, aspirations and desire to be respected in this world. The United Nations has to adapt and submit to the broader sovereignty of the peoples of this world, who are crying out for their voices to be heard, heeded and respected.

We have heard speeches today at the start of this sixty-ninth session. We also believe in strengthening the role of the Secretary-General. As we have said so many times we must have a Secretary-General who represents all of us and who has the political and institutional clout to find solutions to the world's conflicts. We must reconfigure the system and functions of the General Assembly. We must democratize it and give it a leading role to ensure that the great debates that take place here can always successfully address the major issues facing the world. That is why we believe that we must build a new United Nations in a bid for a new multipolar world of peace where there no empire can impose its will on a unipolar world. This is urgent for the entire world.

Above and beyond what officials of the various Governments represented in this Hall may believe, we already have another world where we all wish to speak, think and decide our own fate and to achieve peace for our peoples. A new regionalism has come to the fore. In the late 1940s and the 1950s, we saw the birth of the European Union as an experiment in the new regionalism that is admired and emulated by many throughout the world. In the 1970s and 1980s, we saw the emergence of the Organization of African Unity, an extraordinary system to organize the brotherly African continent to address the issues of development and life. Our mother Africa was one of the most suffering regions the world.

Now as we embark on the twenty-first century, Latin America is taking its place. We have seen new organizations arise in Latin America. On 14 December, we will commemorate in Havana, Cuba, a heroic island and great homeland, the tenth anniversary of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas. We have assumed an important role in building a new social and economic order in defence of such major causes as climate change. In existence for 10 years now, that youthful organization, partnership or alliance is now looking forward to the rest of the twenty-first century.

I would also mention Petrocaribe and its 18 brotherly member States. I hope I may be forgiven if I seem immodest, but PetroCaribe is a model that best shows how we can have a new world of peace, justice, solidarity, cooperation and complementarity among nations. To the powerful of the world, those who wield all the capital and all the economic power, I say that we can have another world. We are starting to build it in the Americas.

Also emerging is the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), representing a new southern regionalism that was founded on 16 April 2007 with the participation of new leaders in Latin America and our Commander Hugo Chávez. It is a most interesting and important bloc that is now starting to forge ties with the rest of the emerging world.

We recently held a very interesting and important meeting for the remainder of the decade between the BRICS countries — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, who represent the hope for development through new mechanisms — and UNASUR in Brasilia, and we decided to share our experiences. The BRICS Bank and the Banco del Sur would be a new financial architecture for the world that must emerge from this new regionalism. The Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) was established on 3 December 2011 in Caracas, and is already growing strong. We have held summits in Santiago de Chile and Havana and will hold another in San José in January. All of Latin America is coming together optimistically in this new regionalism.

Based on this experience, we are seeing new structures arise towards the establishment of a road map for overhauling the United Nations system. Let the call for reform of the Organization not fall through the cracks here in this Hall. We must find the way. We must try to come up with a common road map for humankding because we need it if we are to tackle the major issues before us.

For 22 years, the United Nations has customarily voted with record insistence for a cause that is not just a cause of the Americas but one espoused by the peoples and Governments of this world. I speak of the rejection of the economic embargo against our brother Republic of Cuba — an anachronistic vestige of the Cold War. The President of Estonia spoke earlier about the anachronisms of the Cold War and the systems of economic persecution used to impose political regimes and subjugate peoples. We are here on behalf of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to confirm our support for the 50-year struggle of the people and Government of Cuba against the criminal blockade. I ask President Obama: When will you seize the opportunity to go down in history by putting an end once and for all to the criminal economic and trade embargo and persecution of our brother country of Cuba?

We also see new causes arise in the current struggles facing our region. We have taken them on in unison. I wish here to recognize as a great step forward the decision taken by the General Assembly two weeks ago in support of the Argentine Republic and President Cristina Fernández in her struggle against the financial plundering of the vulture funds. We want to support her in every way we can to ensure that the General Assembly, in accordance with the proposal of the Group of 77 and China and in as timely and efficient a manner as possible, drafts a high-quality document mandating the defence of the nations represented by the Organization, especially the poor countries of the developing world, against vulture funds that seek to plunder our economies and impose detrimental economic, institutional and political systems. We confirm the full solidarity of the people of Venezuela with the people of Argentina, and indeed the solidarity of the CELAC countries. Let us move towards this historic decision. We received 124 votes in favour last week.

As we did at the CELAC summit in Havana, Venezuela also calls on the United Nations to support as closely and warmly as it can and enforce the decisions calling on the United States of America to enforce and execute a decolonization plan for Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico was invited to join CELAC because it is Caribbean and it is ours. We raise our voice to make it heard in this Hall to call for the release of a man whose name many here will hear for the first time. President Jacob Zuma of South Africa spoke of the great Madiba, Nelson Mandela, who was forgotten for many years, despite the fact that many now claim him as a representative of their causes. That is fine. Nelson Mandela represents the human capacity of resilience and resistance enjoyed by people as they seek to achieve the objectives of justice and peace.

That is why I raise the name of a man who almost 35 years ago was imprisoned and has been subjected to torture — a man with a family, a man from Latin America and the Caribbean, a man like us. We are talking about the Puerto Rican Oscar López Rivera, the longest-held political prisoner who remains in a United States prison to this day. We demand his immediate release. His only sin was to fight for independence and to defend the beautiful flag and star of the dignity of our sister country of Puerto Rico. These are the causes of this historic moment.

Venezuela is in the midst of a people's democratic revolution that began with an unimpeachable constitutional event. For the first time in the history of our country, the Constitution of the Republic was debated by the people and approved by a referendum with the participation of the sovereign vote of the people of Venezuela in 1999. Since then, we have been developing and carrying out a process of political and social liberation.

We are trying to overcome poverty. In 2015, we will have the post-2015 development agenda and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will be over. Through great effort, the Bolivarian Venezuela led by our Commander Hugo Chávez, was fortunately able achieve practically all the MDGs. We have an enrolment rate of more than 90 per cent in almost all schools, and we offer free, quality education from basic schools through to universities. We have lowered the unemployment rate from 20 per cent five years ago to 5.5 per cent at the end of last year. We have changed the curves. We had vulnerable employment to the tune of 60 per cent; now, 60 per cent of those jobs are protected by social security, and are remunerated at a fair, regulated rate.

I could spend hours here talking of the progress we have made towards the MDGs. We have been able to salvage our oil wealth. I am sure Members will know that we have the largest oil reserves on the planet in the beautiful Orinoco basin, and we have the largest oil fields there. For the first time in 90 years, we recovered full control over our own petroleum resources as the anchor for our economic and social development. Venezuela has had to suffer ongoing harassment and persecution at the hands of the imperial forces and the allies of the United States empire, who have sought again and again to undermine our democracy. One such attempt was the attempted coup against Hugo Chávez. Following his death on 5 March 2013, those forces resumed their activities to undermine our country. I thank the Governments of the world for their solidarity with Venezuela, which has been struggling and resisting. They could not prevail against Hugo Chávez and they cannot prevail against us. We are still on the path towards revolution, democracy, independence and dignity, with our own voice speaking to the world.

There are major problems that we now have to address at this point. As members well know, one such problem — perhaps the greatest threat of all — is the virus that causes Ebola haemorrhagic fever. If this world and our United Nations system had been somewhat more humane, we would have focused on lending our support to tackling this real threat instead of sending drones, missiles and bombs to destroy the people of Gaza or to bomb the people of Iraq and Syria. The President of Chad announced that his country had decided to donate $2 million to the Ebola fund. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela is going to be giving $5 million to the fund to support Africa and the needy people of the world.

Let us be clear. We should be discussing the scientific reports here and taking decisions based on those reports. We should be focused on another important issue affecting the survival of humankind on this Earth — climate change. A poem of the indigenous peoples of the Americas, which was read out yesterday, says that after they can no longer poison the rivers, after they have poisoned our lakes, once there is not even one fish left to eat, then the powerful of the world will have to eat each other. They want to create extraneous formulas when all they need to do is to make an extraordinary effort and recognize climate change as a climatic emergency. We should not just make speeches and vague offers; we must restore sanity to the Organization if we are to strengthen it, and place at the forefront of our agenda the real common problems facing us.

Today in the Security Council, they adopted a series of decisions in a bid to combat terrorism. Let us be clear: we must combat terrorism. The Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America has been condemning terrorism for more than a year and a half. We are deeply pained by the murder of Western journalists and the dastardly acts of these terrorists, but a year and a half ago when boys and girls were captured by these terrorist and other groups in Syria, we were not that pained at that time. They were beheading women in mosques. The pain should be the same.

Should our pain be greater depending on the colour or origin of the skin of a person or the origin of that person? The loss of human lives should pain us all, and we therefore condemn the terrorist attack perpetrated by NATO and its allies to change the regime in Syria. I am here to say, with force of truth, on behalf of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America and my Government, that if the Government of Syria had been overthrown by those imperial attacks, today in that entire region of Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan we would see the power of those terrorists take root.

As painful as it may be, we have to say that President Bashar Al-Assad and the democratic and constitutional Government of Syria has always combated terrorism and has suffered thousands of deaths. We believe that instead of the continual, demented bombing, must strike a great alliance of peace against terrorism, respecting the sovereignty of countries and sovereign Governments throughout that region. I would ask the delegation of the United States take note of this message and convey it to President Obama.

Only an alliance that respects the sovereignty of those nations, along with the cooperation of their Governments, peoples and armed forces, will overthrow the Islamic State and the terrorist forces advancing like monster against the West. There is no other way to overthrow them — certainly not with bombs that kill mostly the innocent. They never kill the armed forces; they always kill the innocent. After so much death and bombing of the brotherly Arab people of Iraq, we have to invite the sovereign Governments of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Egypt and indeed the entire region to come up with a comprehensive political, military, cultural and communication strategy that can be supported by the Security Council. Anything else is crazy.

Let us consider what happened in Libya, as noted by the President of Chad. It only fomented hatred and an anti-Al-Qadhafi front. What is happening in Libya? It has become a territory for trafficking in arms and explosives by terrorist groups fighting for scraps of territory. We have seen the end of the beautiful history of the people of our brother country of Libya. It is a crazy race towards more violence and terrorism. A more dangerous world has emerged from the demented work of those who lead and make decisions in the Organization.

We humbly lend our voice and our proposal to the table, and we do so with genuine love. That is how we show our solidarity with the people of Palestine. We in the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America will continue to show our solidarity with them. Venezuela, as Members know, has opened a modest air-bridge to provide logistical support, food, blankets and medicines in support of the people of Palestine who recently suffered a brutal attack. We want peace, total peace. Our Organization needs to be overhauled so that everyone can enjoy total peace. It is not through the threat of the use of force, or the use of force, or internal competition to overthrow Governments such as the one that I lead, that we will have stable peace. No, it is respect for international law that will lead to stable peace and full security.

Lastly, I wish to thank the General Assembly for its support. Next year, 2015, Venezuela, with members' support, will assume leadership of the Non-Aligned Movement for the next three years. We humbly aspire to play a genuine role in mobilizing and revitalizing the entire process of United Nations reform. The process must include the elaboration of an agenda of world priorities in which we will all have a voice and a vote, and no one can impose their will on the others. Next year, delegations from throughout the world will be welcome at the historic Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Caracas.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nicolás Maduro Moros, President of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by The Right Honourable David Cameron, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The Right Honourable David Cameron, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency, David Cameron, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Cameron (United Kingdom): This year we face extraordinary tests of our values and our resolve. In responding to the aggression against one of our Member States, Ukraine; in seeking peace in the Middle East; in dealing with the terrifying spread of the Ebola virus in West Africa; and in overcoming what I want to focus on today, which is the mortal threat we all face from the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Syria and Iraq. Deir ez-Zor is a province in eastern Syria. Home to the Al-Sheitaat tribe it was captured by ISIL last month. Seven hundred tribesmen were executed; many were beheaded. The vast majority were civilians, Muslims who refused to take an oath of allegiance to ISIL's sick extremist world view and who paid for this with their lives. They are not alone. Across Syria and northern Iraq thousands have suffered the same fate — Muslims, both Sunni and Shia; Christians; Yazidis; people of every faith and none.

ISIL is not a problem restricted to just one region. It has murderous plans to expand its borders well beyond Iraq and Syria and to carry out terrorist atrocities right across the world. It is recruiting new fighters from all over the world. Five hundred have gone there from my country, Britain, and one of them almost certainly brutally murdered two American journalists and a British aid worker. This is a problem that affects us all and we must tackle it together.

There is not one person in this Hall who will view this challenge without reference to the past, whether in Iraq or in Afghanistan. Of course it is absolutely right that we should learn the lessons of the past, especially what happened in Iraq a decade ago. But we have to learn the right lessons — yes to careful preparation; no to rushing to join a conflict without a clear plan. But we must not be so frozen with fear that we do not do anything at all. Isolation and withdrawing from a problem like ISIL will only make matters worse.

We must not allow past mistakes to become an excuse for indifference or inaction. The right lesson is that we should act, but act differently. We should be comprehensive, defeating the ideology of extremism that is the root cause of this terrorism, so that we win the battle of ideas and not just the battle of military might. We should be intelligent, supporting representative and accountable Governments and working with them at their request, not going in over their heads. We should be inclusive, working with partners in the region who are prepared to be part of the solution, potentially including Iran. We should be uncompromising, using all the means at our disposal, including military force, to hunt down these extremists. Let me take each of these in turn.

The root cause of this terrorist threat is a poisonous ideology of Islamist extremism. This has nothing to do with Islam, which is a peaceful religion that inspires countless acts of generosity every day. Islamist extremism on the other hand believes in using the most brutal forms of terrorism to force people to accept a warped world view and to live in a quasi-mediaeva' state. To defeat ISIL, and organizations like it, we musi defeat this ideology in all its forms.

As evidence emerges about the backgrounds of those convicted of terrorist offences, it is clear that many of them were initially influenced by preachers who claim not to encourage violence but whose world view can be used as a justification for it. We know this world view. The peddling of lies — that 9/11 was somehow a Jewish plot, or that the 7/7 London attacks were staged; the idea that Muslims are persecuted all over the world as a deliberate act of Western policy; and the concept of an inevitable clash of civilizations.

We must be clear. To defeat the ideology of extremism we need to deal with all forms of extremism, not just violent extremism. For governments there are some obvious ways we can do this. We must ban preachers of hate from coming to our countries. We must proscribe organizations that incite terrorism against people at home and abroad. We must work together to take down illegal online material like the recent videos of ISIL murdering hostages. We must stop the so-called non-violent extremists from inciting hatred and intolerance in our schools, universities and even our prisons. Of course, some will argue that this is not compatible with free speech and intellectual inquiry. But I ask "Would we sit back and allow right-wing extremists, Nazis or Ku Klux Klansmen to recruit on our university campuses?" No, so we should not stand by and just allow any form of non-violent extremism.

We need to argue that prophecies of a global war of religion pitting Muslims against the rest of the world are nonsense. We need Muslims and their Governments throughout the world to reclaim their religion from these sick terrorists as so many are doing, and quite rightly doing, today. We all need to help them with programmes that channel young people away from these poisonous ideologues, and we need the strongest possible international focus on tackling this ideology, which is why here at the United Nations the United Kingdom is calling for a new Special Representative on extremism.

But fighting extremism will never be enough. Communism was defeated not simply by pointing out its flaws, but by showing that the alternative of economic freedoms, democracy and the rule of law could build a better society and a better world. Young people need to see the power of a different, better, more open, more democratic path. The twentieth century taught us the vital role of representative and accountable Governments in offering their people opportunity, hope and dignity.

Of course we should not be naïve. Not every country can move at the same speed or even reach the same destination. We should respect different cultures, traditions and histories. But let us be clear — the failure to meet people's aspirations can create a breeding ground where extremist and even terrorist insurgency can take root. Governments that only govern for some of their people cause deep resentment. In Iraq, the failure of the Al-Maliki Government to represent all of the people has driven some of them into the arms of the extremists.

Too often, people have been faced with a false choice between an autocratic and unrepresentative government on the one hand and a brutal insurgency, with religion misused as its rallying call, on the other. To combat this we must support the building blocks of free and open societies. In Iraq this means supporting the creation of a new and genuinely inclusive Government capable of uniting all Iraqis — Sunnis, Shia, Kurd, Christians and others. In Syria, it must mean a political transition and an end to Al-Assad's brutality.

I know there are some who think that we should do a deal with Al-Assad in order to defeat ISIL. But I think this view is dangerously misguided. Our enemies' enemy is not our friend; it is another enemy. Doing a deal with Al-Assad will not defeat ISIL because the bias and the brutality of the Al-Assad regime were and are one of the most powerful recruiting tools for the extremists. Syria needs what Iraq needs — an inclusive, representative, democratic Government that can look after the interests of all its peoples.

To those who have backed Al-Assad or who have stood on the sidelines, I would say this: "We are ready to join with you in a new political effort to secure a representative and accountable Government in Damascus that can take the fight to ISIL". It is simply not credible for Al-Assad to lead such a government although we are prepared to look at every practical option to find a way forward.

We must be inclusive, engaging the widest possible coalition of countries in this international effort. ISIL is a threat to us all, but the greatest threat is to the region. It is very welcome that a number of Arab countries have already taken part in the action to degrade ISIL. They have shown courage and leadership. Iran should also be given the chance to show it can be part of the solution, not part of the problem. Earlier today I met with President Rouhani. We have severe disagreements. Iran's support for terrorist organizations, its nuclear programme, and its treatment of its people all need to change. But Iran's leaders could help in defeating the threat from ISIL. They could help to secure a more stable, inclusive Iraq, and a more stable and inclusive Syria. If they are prepared to do this, we should welcome their engagement.

Finally, when the safety and security of our people are at stake, we must be uncompromising in our response. That starts at home. For our part, in the United Kingdom we are introducing new powers to strengthen our ability to seize passports and stop suspects from travelling; to allow us to strip British identity from dual nationals and temporarily prevent some British nationals getting back into our country; to ensure that airlines comply with our no fly lists and security screening requirements; and to enable our police and security services to apply for stronger locational constraints on those in the United Kingdom who pose a risk. Here at the United Nations we have led in the adoption of a Security Council resolution to disrupt the flows of finance to ISIL, to sanction those who are seeking to recruit to ISIL and to encourage countries to do all they can to prevent foreign fighters joining the extremist cause.

What about the role of our military? I do not believe that the treat of Islamist extremism will best be solved by Western ground troops directly trying to pacify or reconstruct Middle Eastern or African countries. But, pursuing an intelligent and comprehensive approach should include a place for our military. Our military can support the enormous humanitarian efforts that are necessary, as our Royal Air Force did in helping the millions of people who fled from ISIL. We should, together, do more to build the capability of the legitimate authorities that are fighting the extremists. That can mean training, equipping and advising, and providing technology and the other assets necessary for success. Whether it is supporting action against Boko Haram in Nigeria, against Al-Shabaab in Somalia, against Ansar al-Sharia in Libya, or against Al-Qaida in Yemen, it is right to help those who are fighting on the front line for their societies, their countries and their freedom.

Along with our European partners, we have already been supplying equipment directly to Kurdish forces. We are strengthening the resilience of the military forces in neighbouring Lebanon and Jordan, and British Tornado and surveillance aircraft have already been helping with intelligence gathering and logistics support to help those taking on ISIL in Iraq.

We now have a substantial international coalition in place, including Arab nations, committed to confronting and defeating ISIL. We have a comprehensive strategy to do that, with the political, diplomatic, humanitarian and military components that are needed to succeed over time. The Security Council has now received a clear request from the Iraqi Government to support it in its military action against ISIL. So we have a clear basis in international law for action, and we have a need to act in our own national interest to protect our people and our society. It is right that Britain should now move to a new phase of action. I am therefore recalling the British Parliament on Friday to secure approval for the United Kingdom to take part in international air strikes against ISIL in Iraq.

My message today is simple. We are facing an evil against which the whole world should unite. As ever, in the cause of freedom, democracy and justice, Britain will play its part.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for the statement he has just made.

Mr. David Cameron, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Ms. Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Prime Minister of Denmark

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Denmark.

Ms. Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Prime Minister of Denmark, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming Her Excellency Ms. Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Prime Minister of Denmark, and inviting her to address the General Assembly.

Ms. Thorning-Schmidt (Denmark): Despite our aspirations to create a more just and peaceful world, atrocities continue to take place. Every day we witness expressions of the darker side of human nature: thousands of innocent civilians besieged on a mountain in northern Iraq by heavily armed extremists; a Syrian dictator who bombs and starves his own people, leaving more than 10 million people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance; the persecution of people because of their religious or political beliefs, their gender or sexual orientation; disrespect for national borders, challenging the basic principles on which our rules-based international order is built; climate change causing great risks to human health, global food security and economic development and to the natural resources on which so much of our prosperity depends; and a world of more than 7 billion people with an increasing demand for key resources and an unsustainable pattern of consumption and production.

The challenges we face are complex. There are no simple solutions. What is required of us is strong, collective international action, not only to manage the crises and conflicts of today but to prevent the crises and conflicts of tomorrow. I am a true believer in international cooperation and in the virtues of the United Nations, but as the world changes and we are faced with new challenges, we must find new ways to adapt.

Mr. Dabbashi (Libya), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I am also confident that we will adapt, but only if we have a strong United Nations, and only if we act together. As Member States each one of us must fulfil our obligations under the Charter. That is our common commitment and our shared responsibility. I see three challenges where we, the United Nations, should act and should act now. Urgency is key.

First, we need stronger international cooperation and action on peace and security. Secondly, we have to reach an ambitious international agreement on climate change next year in Paris. Thirdly, we have to agree on the post-2015 agenda for sustainable development.

Of the three challenges, the first is international peace and security. This past year, we have seen the rise of a violent and intensifying conflict fuelled by extremism, in particular the horrific and brutal terrorist organization, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). ISIL represents a distorted political ideology that must be confronted, degraded and defeated by the entire international community, including, of course, countries in the region. As we are gathered this week, the States Members of the United Nations are sending a clear message that we utterly condemn ISIL's cowardly acts of terror and that we are unified in our firm resolve to oppose and confront its violent and extremist ideology. Let it be clear that we are determined to support the Iraqi Government in protecting its people.

Denmark will stand up for our common values as enshrined in the United Nations Charter, and Denmark will support the victims of ISIL'S atrocities. We are taking part in the humanitarian relief efforts in northern Iraq, and we will continue our active contribution to the international efforts to support Iraq in the fight against ISIL. To stop the advance of ISIL, it is imperative to end the flow of foreign fighters and financing from outside. That indeed is a common obligation. It is also critical that we address the root causes of violent extremism and improve the conditions in Syria that ISIL has been able to exploit.

The humanitarian situation in Syria continues to be of great concern. Though progress is difficult, we must spare no effort to seek a political solution leading to a transition from the current regime. There will always be a risk that political transition will be exploited by violent extremists. Still, history shows that democratic and inclusive Governments, open societies and a fundamental respect for human rights remain the only viable path towards stability, security and prosperity for our citizens.

Bringing an end to the violence in the region will require a sustained and comprehensive contribution from every one of us. The successful removal of Al-Assad's chemical weapons clearly demonstrated what can be achieved when we join forces in decisive international action. A coalition of Denmark, Norway, Russia, China, Finland, the United Kingdom and the United States effectively secured and destroyed those horrendous weapons of war.

Our united response is also required against another growing threat. The Ebola epidemic has become a severe humanitarian, social and economic crisis for countries in West Africa. If we fail to act now, it may develop into a global health crisis, impacting millions of people. If so, we will not only be confronted with a health crisis but also with a threat to international peace, prosperity and security. It is very clear that this challenge cannot be tackled by any one nation alone. That is why we must all lend our support. The United Nations and its Member States have a common responsibility to bring Ebola under control.

Ebola is not just a regional challenge; it has now become a global crisis. Denmark is committed to that cause. We have already contributed to the international response, including the United Nations humanitarian air service, and we will now increase our support. Today, I can announce that Denmark will provide a maritime transport capacity to the United Nations. With that, we will support the construction of needed housing facilities for the international health personnel in the affected areas. We will provide additional funding to the World Health Organization. As the situation evolves, we will stand ready to consider additional steps.

The global community is based on international law. That law must be respected and not blatantly violated, as we have seen done in the past year. We have witnessed an unacceptable foreign intervention in Ukraine. Fundamental principles of national sovereignty and non-interference have been disrespected. The recent ceasefire is an important step on the only viable way forward, namely, a political solution. Yet, we have to see Russia's commitment to a political solution demonstrated in action, not only in words. Throughout the conflict Russia's self-proclaimed support to the peace process has been in stark contrast to realities on the ground.

We remain fully committed to a political solution that respects Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Respect for international law and human rights should always be at the very core of peace and development, as should the rule of law and good governance. That is why Denmark strongly supports bold and significant new steps in the United Nations, such as the Secretary-General's recent Rights Up Front initiative.

This year also marks the thirtieth anniversary of the adoption of the United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Together with Chile, Ghana, Indonesia and Morocco, Denmark has launched a long-term initiative for the universal ratification and implementation of that Convention. We have made significant progress, but we also need to do more to protect men and women in all parts of the world from torture and ill-treatment.

My second point is about the need to advance our collective answer to the challenges posed by climate change. Earlier this year I had the privilege, together with the Premier of Greenland, of hosting a visit by the Secretary-General to Greenland. We travelled together by dog sleigh on the receding ice, and we heard the stories told by the local population about how the changes are affecting local livelihoods. Climate change is painfully visible in the Arctic. That is beyond discussion. Let there be no illusion that climate change will have only regional impacts. The changes will affect each and every one of us on this planet. That is why ambitious action is required of us now. One crucial step would be a binding global agreement to reduce carbon dioxide emissions in Paris next year.

Since 2010, Denmark has dedicated $350 million to climate action. This year alone, we will commit more than $100 million. But Governments cannot do this alone. We need to engage the private sector and other partners to commit to action and ensure adequate climate finance and foster innovation and green solutions. Some still might fear that the green transition will limit economic growth. That is not necessarily so. For example, the Danish economy has grown by 40 per cent since 1990, while our total emissions have decreased by 20 per cent in that same period. In other words, it is possible to de-link economic growth from increased emissions. At the Secretary-General's Climate Summit yesterday, world leaders expressed their commitment to address those issues. Now is the time to deliver on that commitment.

The third and final area where Denmark sees an urgent need for action is on the post-2015 agenda for sustainable development. As stated by the Secretary-General: "Ours is the first generation that can wipe poverty from the face of the Earth" (*A/68/PV.5, p. 1*). That is not a message based on wishful thinking. It is based on the facts. It is within our reach and it has to be done. Over a 20-year period, from 1990-2010, 700 million people have been lifted out of extreme poverty. Child mortality has been reduced by almost 50 per cent. Ninety per cent of children in developing regions now attend primary schools. That represents truly historic progress. But still we need to do more.

The Millennium Development Goals were formulated almost 15 years ago, and the world has, as we know, developed rapidly since. Clearly, the new set of sustainable development goals must address and integrate the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of development.

Another important factor is to ensure women's empowerment, gender equality and the rights of women and girls. That includes sexual and reproductive health rights. In too many places those fundamental rights are still not observed. Women and young girls must have the right to decide freely whether they want to have children, when, how many, and with whom.

All young people must have access to proper education. Two hundred years ago, compulsory education was introduced in my country. Education for the many and not just for the few has been a primary driver in transforming Denmark into a democratic and prosperous nation. Education has also been a driver of gender equality, and still is. That is one aspect of the post-2015 agenda that is particularly close to my heart. I have been very proud to be one of the Secretary-General's Champions for his Global Education First Initiative. One of our key priorities must be to ensure quality education also for the most disadvantaged groups and in the most vulnerable countries.

As we look at the global landscape today, insecurity is sadly on the rise. We all know who is paying the highest price. Today for the first time since the Second World War, more than 50 million people throughout the world have been displaced owing to conflict and violence. Far too many of those people are children.

We need a United Nations that can help mediate, prevent and resolve armed conflicts and promote universal respect for human rights. We need a United Nations that is committed to act against climate change. And we need a United Nations that can help deliver sustainable development for all and provide effective assistance to countries suffering from the Ebola virus.

But the United Nations can do nothing without the collective political will of all of us, its Member States. The world needs a United Nations that adapts to new challenges and reflects the changing global political realities. Denmark supports a reformed Security Council that fulfils its primary purpose and responsibility when peace and security is threatened. We need a United Nations based on the strong values and obligations enshrined in the United Nations Charter. More than ever, we need a United Nations that acts.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Denmark for the statement she has just made.

Ms. Helle Thorning-Schmidt, Prime Minister of Denmark, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Prime Minister of Ukraine

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Ukraine.

Mr. Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Prime Minister of Ukraine, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Prime Minister of Ukraine, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Yatsenyuk (Ukraine): Ukraine, as a co-founder of the United Nations, knows why we established this Organization — for peace and stability. Do we have this peace and stability? No, and yet our global aim and global target is to do everything we can to protect our citizens and to deliver peace to our nations. The global agenda today consists of a number of things. Everyone has mentioned the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, everyone has mentioned Ebola, and everyone has mentioned Ukraine. Frankly speaking I would be happy not to be in this situation, but we are a country that knows what terrorism means, and not in words but in deeds, in practice.

Let me remind Members of the origin of the conflict that is evolving in Ukraine. Is it a domestic conflict? No. It is true that my country has some internal differences, but every country has differences and we are ready to handle and tackle those differences inside our country. The origin of the conflict is an invasion by the Russian Federation. A permanent member of the Security Council has violated the United Nations Charter, which is absolutely and entirely unacceptable behaviour, especially on the part of a permanent member of the Council. It would be better for Russia to be an "insecurity" member rather than a security one.

Twenty years ago, Ukraine abandoned its nuclear weapons. We possessed the third-biggest arsenal in the world. When we agreed to relinquish our nuclear power arsenal in Budapest, Ukraine got guarantees of territorial integrity and sovereignty. Russia was a co-signer of and co-contributor to that memorandum. Instead of security guarantees, 20 years later we received Russian military boots on Ukrainian soil. It seems that it is difficult to convince another country to stop nuclear proliferation. We are committed to our nuclear non-proliferation programme, but we need to have valid guarantees of our territorial integrity, security and independence.

A few months ago, the Russian Federation annexed Crimea. One country, which is a Member State of the United Nations and a permanent member of the Security Council, a country that is armed to the teeth, just decided to grab the land of its neighbour, independent Ukraine. Let me commend the efforts of United Nations Member States that overwhelmingly supported the resolution supporting Ukraine's territorial integrity and condemning the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation. They moved further. For today we can state that Russian troops are deployed in the east of Ukraine. The Russian Federation violated a number of bilateral and multilateral international agreements, starting with the United Nations Charter and ending with the resolutions on counter-terrorism that were adopted at the United Nations.

We know what terrorism means, and we urge Russia to pull back its forces, to pull back its artillery, to stop supplying Russian-led terrorists, to restore control over the Ukrainian-Russian border, and to start real talks, peace talks. We are the country that needs peace. It is difficult to hammer out any kind of peace deal at the barrel of a gun made in Russia.

Let me remind members of a tragedy that happened because of the Russian invasion. A few months ago, a civilian aircraft, Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17, was downed by a Russian-made surface-to-air missile, and 298 innocent civilians were killed. Ukraine mourns the victims. We pray together with the families from the Netherlands, Australia, the United Kingdom, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Germany. Ukraine handed over the investigation to an independent body which is Dutch-led. We urge everyone to help us to bring to justice those responsible for this despicable crime, a crime against humanity.

Every day, despite the ceasefire, we are losing Ukrainian soldiers and civilians, and the shelling is still going on. I reiterate once again that we need peace. What is the formula for this peace? The military option is definitely not the best option. It has to be a comprehensive approach which comprises diplomatic, financial, political and, only at the last, military options.

The United States and the European Union imposed a number of sanctions against Russia. We do understand that sanctions are the way to start real talks and to hammer out a peace deal. We have no trust in words. We have trust only in deeds and actions. Once again we reiterate our commitment to restore law and order. We urge the Russian Federation to stick to its international obligation to execute everything that was written in Minsk. This is not a menu where one can pick the cherry. It means that Russia is to execute all 12 points of this memorandum. We ask our partners not to lift sanctions until Ukraine takes over control of its entire territory, starting with the east of Ukraine and ending with Crimea. Crimea was, is and will be a part of Ukraine.

Let me end with a direct message to the Russian President. Mr. Putin can win the fight against the troops, but he will never win the fight against a united Ukrainian nation.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Ukraine for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Prime Minister of Ukraine, was escorted from the rostrum.

The Acting President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now call on His Excellency Mr. Rashid Meredov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkmenistan.

Mr. Meredov (Turkmenistan) (*spoke in Russian*): First, I have the honour to convey words of greeting and wishes of peace and prosperity to the Member States and their people on behalf of the President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow. I should like to congratulate Mr. Sam Kutesa on his election to the post of President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session and wish him success in his forthcoming responsibilities. I should also like to express my appreciation to Mr. John Ashe, President at the sixty-eighth session, for his skillful and effective work in this post.

The current session of the General Assembly is taking place against the background of difficult processes that we see in various regions of the world. Assessment of these processes and their causal relationships may differ, but it is apparent that in view of prevailing conditions the world community needs to apply balanced, sober and a highly responsible approach to emerging and potential challenges and threats.

The peaceful resolution of these conflicts must be achieved by diplomatic approaches. It is an objective and imperative requirement of our times. Experience once again vividly demonstrates that there is no military solution to the international and internal conflicts in today's world. It is our firm conviction that the role of the United Nations is acquiring decisive importance. The United Nations must play the leading role in reconciling contradictions, preserving global stability, and strengthening peoples' faith in international institutions and legal frameworks.

The Security Council is called on to assume a special responsibility. Its functions and authority under the United Nations Charter cannot be questioned or used to satisfy some individual or group interest. The Security Council is and must remain the only universal legitimate body for maintaining global peace and stability and safeguardingthe political and moral foundations of the modern global architecture.

Turkmenistan has unceasingly and consistently advocated the expansion and maximum use of the United Nations peacekeeping potential. Today, the need for this is especially relevant. Therefore, our country proposes to actively begin the development of common approaches with a view to reducing and, in future, completely eliminating all potential risks of confrontation.

As the Assembly will recall, the President of Turkmenistan stated at the sixty-sixth session that it was necessary to adopt a United Nations declaration on the priority use of political and diplomatic means to solve international problems and their further consideration at the General Assembly. We are ready to engage in meaningful and constructive discussions with all interested parties on this issue.

The logic of the development of global processes in the sphere of security dictates the need for fundamental strengthening of regional cooperation mechanisms. For Central Asia, such cooperation should ensure favourable conditions for preserving and maintaining lasting peace and stability and for successful responses to terrorist threats, extremism, organized crime and drug trafficking.

In this connection, we consider it relevant to create a standing mechanism of political consultations to coordinate steps aimed at maintaining security in this area, as well as preventing and neutralizing conflict situations and combating new threats. We propose that serious consideration be given to the idea of convening a forum on security and cooperation in Central Asia under the auspices of the United Nations as a starting platform for further work in this area.

We stand ready to host such a forum in 2015 in Turkmenistan's capital, Ashgabat. As the host country of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia, Turkmenistan advocates multilateral support for its work, which has proven to be highly effective. It is not by chance that in August 2012 the United Nations Security Council emphasized the great importance of preventive diplomacy and early settlement of disputes and in this connection supported the efforts of the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia. We are convinced that in the context of current and future developments of political, economic, environmental and humanitarian processes in the Central Asian region and neighbouring areas, the mandate of the Centre will be especially relevant and necessary. We therefore call for more active involvement of that Centre in various aspects of regional problems with the support of Member States.

Turkmenistan also believes that it is essential to establish a more focused and substantive interaction between the Regional Centre and international organizations, including the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the European Union, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and other bodies, with a view to elaborating common approaches to such current issues as transnational threats, terrorism, illegal drug trafficking, environmental challenges, management of transboundary water and energy resources, and regional security in the context of the situation in Afghanistan.

In speaking of this, I wish to underline that the settlement of the situation in Afghanistan is a key factor in achieving regional peace and stability. It is essential to support the positive processes that are taking place in this country and to provide the Afghan people with real assistance in achieving reconciliation and accord. That can be achieved only through peaceful negotiation. There are no other options here.

As a neutral country and Afghanistan's immediate neighbour, Turkmenistan offered its political space for the organization of a broad-based inter-Afghan national dialogue under the auspices and active involvement of the United Nations. We already have joint experience in conducting negotiations in such a format. We believe that it could be used today as well. Such dialogue, in addition to purely political aspects, implies the discussion of a full set of measures aimed at providing specific economic support to Afghanistan and the involvement of that country in regional integration processes and future infrastructure projects.

For many years Turkmenistan has provided assistance to its neighbour in building social facilities and initiated the implementation of major transport and energy projects with Afghanistan's participation. In particular, I note the project envisaging construction of the Turkmenistan/Pakistan/India gas pipeline, preparations for which are nearing the final stages. Another major project, which was launched in May last year, involves the construction of a Turkmenistan/Afghanistan/Tajikstan railway. We consider these projects to be key in rebuilding the economy and social spheres of Afghanistan, and enabling it to make thetransition to a peaceful and creative existence.

For a number of years our country has consistently supplied electric power to Afghanistan on highly favourable terms. In the near future, thanks to the commissioning of new power-generating capacities in Turkmenistan, we are prepared to increase the volume of power supplied to Afghanistan many-fold. As in the past, we provide purpose-oriented training of specialists for the Afghan economy, health care and social spheres. We will continue to provide all-encompassing help to the fraternal Afghan people. It is our principled position.

Turkmenistan believes that the irreversible nature of the disarmament process is the most important prerequisite for the peaceful and creative development of the region and the establishment of a climate of trust, openness and cooperation in Central Asia. Our country proceeds from the assumption that the inert model of the past century, which was based on the constant build-up of armaments, has become irrelevant in today's world. Furthermore, it considerably hampers and sometimes directly undermines efforts by States towards social and economic development, the enhancement of people's standards of living, and the development of successful economic cooperation. It is our conviction that the fewer weapons there are in the world, the more stable and peaceful its development will be, and the more trust and understanding among countries and peoples will deepen.

We call for consistent strengthening of international and regional cooperation in reducing the arsenals of weapons of mass destruction and the effective implementation of the non-proliferation regime. As a party to the basic disarmament treaties and conventions of the United Nations, Turkmenistan intends to continue to provide support to all the relevant processes.In this connection, while emphasizing the landmark nature of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons that was held in Vienna in 2012, Turkmenistan believes that it is key to continue the current dialogue on measures aimed at expanding the international legal framework of non-proliferation.

This dialogue becomes especially relevant in view of the practical steps that are being taken in order to implement the Treaty on a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone in Central Asia. Our country stands ready to engage in constructive disarmament cooperation with the Office of the Deputy Secretary-General and to participate in the implementation of a number of initiatives in this regard. One of the practical steps in the implementation of measures for disarmament could be the improvement of existing United Nations structures. In this context, we believe that it will be useful to consider the establishment of a United Nations subregional disarmament centre in Central Asia.

Turkmenistan looks forward to the logical continuation at this session of the broad-based dialogue on energy security as one of the fundamental elements of the United Nations sustainable development strategy initiated by the President of Turkmenistan. As is well known, in May 2013 the General Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 67/263 entitled "Reliable and stable transit of energy and its role in ensuring sustainable development and international cooperation". The resolution was sponsored by 71 Member States. The adoption of the resolution was yet another major and consecutive step in advancing international cooperation in the sphere of energy. We believe that adherence to the letter and spirit of that document should acquire a substantive and purpose-oriented nature.

In this connection, we call on Member States and the Secretariat to actively undertake consultations on the practical implementation of the provisions of this resolution. In particular, we note the institutionalization of the work of the international group of experts on energy cooperation and nominating representatives of Member States to that group. In December, the first international meeting of experts will take place in Turkmenistan. It is designed to launch systematic work on the establishment of a new legal framework of cooperation in sustainable energy. We invite Member States and all interested parties to take part in it.

The outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, entitled "The future we want" (resolution 66/288, annex), emphasizes the central role of transport and mobility in sustainable development. We fully share that approach. Moreover, Turkmenistan is convinced that it is high time to undertake systematic global cooperation and strategic planning in transport as a separate, long-term area of United Nations activity.

In early September, Turkmenistan's capital hosted a high-level international conference dedicated to the role of transport and transit corridors in ensuring international cooperation, stability and sustainable development. The Ashgabat Declaration adopted at the end of the Conference reflects the need to develop new modern criteria for cooperation in this sphere that are oriented towards diversification, security, accessibility, environmental safety of the transportation infrastructure, and its maximum correspondence to the realities of current global development, taking into account the needs of developing countries, including landlocked States. As the President of Turkmenistan emphasized in his address to the participants at that conference, the global transport strategy of the twenty-first century is a strategy for integration, combining geographical and infrastructural opportunities with the technical and technological potentials of States and regions.

The very fact of the convening of that conference was a momentous event, signalling a comprehensive approach to the development of transport and transit corridors based on constructive and real partnerships. Our country has submitted the Ashgabat Declaration to the Secretariat for its distribution among Member States as an official document. We hope that it will be studied with interest and that there will be further use of this Declaration in international agreements, including those of the sixty-ninth session of the Assembly.

With a view to the accelerated development of international transport infrastructure, Turkmenistan advocates closer cooperation and partnerships with specialized bodies of the United Nations, first and foremost the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. We are convinced that such cooperation corresponds to the logic of modern development and international cooperation in transport in the Eurasian continent.

Turkmenistan fully supports the decisions taken during the Summits on Climate Change held in Copenhagen and Cancún, at the seventeenth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Durban, and at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. We look forward to the continuation of constructive international dialogue on these issues. We are convinced that it is necessary to consistently combine efforts at the international, regional and national levels. In this context, we welcome the Secretary-General's efforts to implement the agreed-upon decisions and his sense of utmost responsibility in his approach to international cooperation with respect to climate change issues. Our country recently launched a number of specific initiatives aimed at enhancing regional and global cooperation in this sphere.

I wish to single out Turkmenistan's humanitarian efforts as a member of major United Nations humanitarian agencies. Turkmenistan takes practical steps to ensure the rights and freedoms of its citizens. In particular, our country devotes major attention to solving issues relating to the rights of refugees, migrants and stateless persons. Last June, in our capital, the Government of Turkmenistan, along with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, organized the International Conference on Migration and Statelessness. Upon its conclusion, the Conference adopted a declaration that spells out urgent tasks to improve multilateral cooperation, strengthen international legal frameworks, and reform national legislation on migrants andstateless persons and their legal and social protection, material support and adaptation. Turkmenistan will endeavour at this session to translate the main provisions of this outcome document into reality. We reaffirm our desire and readiness to continue close cooperation with the IOM, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Member States and all stakeholders.

Our country views the sixty-ninth session as a major step towards consolidating international efforts to resolve key issues on the global agenda, to reaffirm the leading role of the United Nations in maintaining and strengthening universal peace and stability and to agree on sustainable development goals. We reaffirm our strong commitment to cooperation with the United Nations, our readiness to actively participate and promote its peacekeeping, political and diplomatic endeavours and to implement its projects and programmes in the economic, social, environmental, humanitarian and other spheres.

For Turkmenistan, partnership with the United Nations has been and continues to be a strategic priority, a conceptual and practical foundation for our activities in the international arena.

The meeting rose at 10 p.m.

United Nations

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General Assembly

Sixty-ninth session

Official Records

9th plenary meeting
Thursday, 25 September 2014, 9 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Kutesa .... (Uganda)

The meeting was called to order at 9.05 a.m.

Address by Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of the Niger

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of the Niger.

Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of the Niger, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of the Niger, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Issoufou (*spoke in French*): Allow me to offer my sincere condolences to the French Government for the cowardly murder of one of its citizens yesterday, 24 September, in Algeria by the so-called Soldiers of the Caliphate.

Sociopolitical crises, religious extremism, armed conflict, terrorism, cross-border crime, identity politics, development issues, the effects of climate change and pandemics such as that currently caused by the Ebola virus are now concerns of the utmost importance that are crying out for action from all players of the international community.

In order to meet the challenges of promoting peace, stability, security and development, we have to further strengthen the spirit of sharing and solidarity. "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda", which the Assembly has identified as the theme of the general debate of the sixty-ninth session, provides a good link with the theme of last year's session. That gives us an opportunity once again to further explore the questions that are of concern to all of us. It is nearly post-2015 already, and crafting a programme that goes beyond that date requires that we take stock of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Despite the remarkable progress in the implementation of some of those goals, it is now clear that there are still vast gaps in other goals, which will persist when the programme is concluded. With respect to the Niger, for example, the implementation of the 3N Initiative, "Les Nigériens nourrissent les Nigériens", has already allowed us to achieve target C of MDG 1, which has to do with reducing by half the number of people who are suffering from hunger. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations has recognized that, in that area, the Niger has achieved impressive results in record time. Our country has also achieved target A of MDG 6, with an HIV/AIDS prevalence rate of 0.4 per cent in 2012, as compared with a target of 0.7 per cent in 2015.

With respect to reducing by half the proportion of people whose income is less than $1 per day, ensuring primary education for all, strengthening gender equality and the empowerment of women, dealing with the mortality of children under five years, reducing maternal mortality and promoting a sustainable environment, major efforts have ben undertaken. Still, those goals will most likely not be achieved, despite the

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implementation of the programme of recovery currently under way since my election in 2011.

In drafting the new post-2015 agenda, we naturally need to maintain all of the unachieved MDGs and provide for measures to avoid a deterioration in areas where the goals have already been achieved. For example, the issue of the demographic dividend should be a priority on the agenda. The demographic dividend, the Assembly will recall, consists of both the demographic transition and inclusive economic growth. More specifically, the demographic dividend means, on the one hand, reducing maternal, infant and juvenile mortality and controlling birth and, on the other hand, providing for sustainable development with its three pillars: economic, social and environmental. The demographic transition is needed to strengthen sustained growth, which in turn should accelerate the demographic transition. I continue to believe that the best contraceptive method, the best condom, is sustainable development.

The post-2015 agenda will be dominated by what I would call the three D's — defence or security, democracy and development. It is fortunate that the international community has now established a close correlation among those three fundamental challenges, which are interconnected. Global peace and security today are, however, threatened by terrorism, by organized crime, by demands based on identity and by the growth of inequality, which have led to the worsening of poverty around the world, from Iraq to Libya, from Syria to Nigeria and from Mali to Somalia.

The enemies who embody that terrorist threat are engaged in an unconventional and asymmetrical combat. They are sending out propaganda through their actions and seek to control populations through terror, including rape; kidnapping young girls, as in Chibok, Nigeria; taking hostages in exchange for ransom: and murder. The war pursued against them is no longer a conventional, industrial war of the kind for which our armies have been trained. Warfare among our populations is not a new phenomenon, but in recent years, it has taken on an exceptional dimension. To deal with that situation, we need to change the paradigm and move from a paradigm of classic conventional war to that of the war that takes place among our populations, which, in turn, presupposes that our countries reform their armies. That also presupposes that our countries train special forces that are capable of adapting to the methods of the enemy.

In order to eradicate the Islamic State or the Al-Nusra Front in Iraq and Syria, neutralize the jihadist organizations in Libya, overcome Al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb and Al-Mourabitoun in the Sahel, particularly in Mali, and oust the Al-Shabaab from Somalia and Boko Haram in Nigeria, the international community needs to establish a shared goal and strategy, working with the countries involved. The common political aim is to defend our democratic institutions and protect our peoples. The strategy would then necessarily have to do with cutting off the sources financing terrorism, whether those sources are States or the drug trade or the payment of ransom. The strategy also needs to deal with the terrorist strategy, which generates propaganda through its actions, and unfortunately, its propaganda is heavily covered by the media and social media on the Internet. In addition, a just settlement of the Palestinian issue could certainly contribute to the fight against this scourge.

As a neighbour of Libya, Nigeria and Mali, the Niger is deeply concerned by the situation prevailing in those countries. In Libya, the international community, together with neighbouring countries, must establish the conditions that would enable it to neutralize the militias, reconcile all Libyans without exception and form a Government of union that would organize elections under the guidance of the international community. The current United Nations Support Mission in Libya must be replaced by a more robust structure, and in this case, a stabilization and institution-building mission. The international community will then have to undertake a vast diplomatic initiative under the auspices of the Secretary-General to promote national reconciliation, which is needed to bring about the end of violence and chaos as well as to assist in the emergence of the true rule of law.

Whatever the case may be, as the leader of a country that is a neighbour of Libya and whose economy and security have been seriously affected by what has been taking place there for three years, my belief is that it is dangerous to leave the current state of affairs in play as it is. We therefore need to have the courage to radically change our perspective and act so as to help Libyans realize their sole aspiration, which is to live in peace.

With respect to Nigeria, Boko Haram has been extremely aggressive and has demonstrated a barbarism never seen before, with its recent incursions into Cameroon and the occupation of ever more territory, going so far as to threaten Maiduguri, the capital of the federated state of Borno in Nigeria. It is evident that that terrorist group has aims that are much larger than had been thought. That means that more effort and cooperation are needed at the regional and international levels in order to deal with the problem effectively. It is in that perspective that the heads of State and Government of Cameroon, the Niger, Nigeria and Chad — the members of the Lake Chad Basin Commission — and Benin, will meet in Niamey on 7 October 2014 to pool their efforts in the fight against this serious threat.

Regarding Mali, I welcome the inclusive inter-Malian dialogue that is currently taking place under the auspices of Algeria. I express the hope that the dialogue will lead to an agreement that respects the unity and integrity of Mali. In Mali, as in the Central African Republic, the question of unity is essential. The Pandora's box of Balkanization, which has been opened elsewhere in Africa, must be closed again if we do not want the rest of the continent to catch fire. The future of Africa is in its unity. The best way to do away with the borders inherited from colonization is not to create new borders along ethnic or religious lines, but to go beyond current borders through integration.

Global security can be ensured only by States with strong and stable democratic institutions. The post-2015 programme must be a priority. Global security can also not be guaranteed as long as inequalities in trade between nations and income inequality within nations persist. Inequalities are morally unacceptable and economically inefficient. Therefore, the struggle against inequality has always been an essential question and one that we must stop avoiding, if we want a more just, humane and prosperous world. That struggle must be central to the post-2015 programme.

Observers are unanimous in saying that Africa, with its high rates of economic growth, is the continent of the twenty-first century. That is true, but only if our continent definitively emerges from the unequal trade situation and from the colonial pact that has always treated Africa as merely a reservoir of raw materials, often sold cheaply, as in the old days when slaves or vast territories were acquired in exchange for mirrors, pins, needles and other junk. The African continent will actually be the continent of the twenty-first century when it, itself, works with its raw materials, that is to say once it takes the place that it deserves in world industrial production. Africa will be the continent of the twenty-first century once its relations with other nations are governed by equitable trade and not by official development assistance. Africa will be the continent of the twenty-first century when there is a huge middle class arising from good political and economic governance, including a better distribution of income to reduce poverty.

Currently, according to a study by the African Development Bank, the African middle class, which is defined as the proportion of Africans with an income between $2 and $20 a day, represents about 30 per cent of the population. Our ambition should be to increase that number to 80 per cent. The vision contained in the 2063 agenda of the African Union suggests that we are on the right track. It is in the interest of the international community to include priorities that are on the agenda of our continent in the post-2015 programme.

The twenty-first century must be the century when Africa equips itself with roads and rail and energy infrastructure and new information and communication technologies. It will also be the century of an agriculture that feeds our population, which is growing larger, and the century of access to water and sanitation services and to education, including vocational and technical training to enable each young person to have a trade.

However, if our children and grandchildren are to have a chance at having a better quality of life, we must meet the challenge of climate change. In that regard, we must congratulate Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on his initiative to convene the Climate Summit. That conference's outcome will be the basis for the decisions that the international community is called upon to take at the climate conference to be held in Paris in December 2015.

We have the imperative duty to save our planet. The global temperature is increasing owing to greenhouse gases, which have led, to take the example of the Sahel region, to a decrease in rainfall and reduced water flows, with the silting up of waterways, as in the case of the Niger River; the drying up of Lake Chad, which has lost 90 per cent of its area in 50 years, shrinking from 25,000 square kilometres to 2,500; extreme flooding and drought; reduced plant cover, including forest loss; reduced biodiversity; reduced crop yields; and thus the impoverishment of the population, whose young people then become an easy target for recruitment by terrorists and organized crime.

However, since the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, we have seen not a decrease but an increase in greenhouse gas emissions. If nothing is done, the temperature increase may surpass 2 degrees centigrade in 20 to 30 years and reach 4 degrees by the end of the century. We must therefore regroup and focus on promoting clean energy, such as hydro-electricity, nuclear energy and solar energy, provided that, in the latter case, we create competitive conditions for it. We also need to promote what is called smart agriculture and make adjustments in the industrial, transport and construction sectors.

I hope that humanity will not squander the opportunity that will be provided in Paris. I hope that we will implement a development model that will enable us to save our planet. I hope that we will be able to build a more just and humane world.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Niger for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mahamadou Issoufou, President of the Republic of the Niger, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Slovak Republic.

Mr. Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kiska: At the outset, allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session and to wish you every success in your important duties.

Let me begin with a quote by Edward Wilson:

> "The great challenge of the twenty-first century is to raise people everywhere to a decent standard of living, while preserving as much of the rest of life as possible."

To preserve life and the sustainability of the planet for every human is not pure theory. It is a practical question for our future and for that of our children. The Millennium Development Goals, the post-2015 framework and the challenge of climate change must form much more than the theoretical basis for our discussions. Those goals must identify, address, offer a solution to and solve problems that in one or two generations may bring the human race to the brink of its own existence.

Seventy years ago, when the Second World War caused tens of millions of deaths, consuming all of the principles of humanity, the patriots and democrats in my country, Slovakia, took up arms and put their lives at risk to fight against evil and for liberty and democratic values. They fought together with many other nations to establish the foundation for new global cooperation, given shape a year later with the adoption of the Charter of the United Nations. The horrors of the Second World War, the failure of the international community to maintain world peace, the direct threat on the part of larger countries to use force against smaller ones and the absence of an international order and rules that are be universally accepted and respected were a painful lesson for us all.

Cooperation among nations has come a long way in the past seven decades. The United Nations has played an important role on that road, but we have not gathered here to celebrate a false sense of success. We have to go much further than simply to identify challenges. It would be a lost opportunity if political correctness and diplomatic language were to limit us from openly and freely naming and discussing the problems that plague our world and the continents, countries and citizens that we represent. We must not betray the commitments that we all made to the principles of democracy, peace and security for every single citizen of our planet. We must look into the mirror to see what we are doing, how we do it, what we are doing or have done wrong and what we can do better. We believed that the number of conflicts would gradually decrease as our civilization matured and developed. However, today, we are confronted with the opposite reality. Instability is increasingly becoming the new status quo. Instability, poverty and hatred are the fertilizers and catalysts of terrorism, and terrorism is a threat to which no one is immune.

A year ago, we Europeans could hardly imagine that, after investing so much effort in achieving peace and stability in our continent, a new armed conflict would arise in our neighbourhood. Conflict is dangerous both in its nature and in its consequences. Twenty years ago, Ukraine abandoned its nuclear programme in exchange for the security and territorial integrity guarantees granted by the United States, the United

Kingdom, China, France and the Russian Federation. Today, instead of marking a major anniversary of achievement in the area of security and stability on the European continent, we are witnessing armed conflict and political instability. Instead of building a world without weapons of mass destruction, we encourage those countries that seek security under the lethal nuclear umbrella.

Slovakia strongly denounces violations of the territorial integrity of any State. That is a trademark of our foreign policy. It is a pillar for the stability of the geopolitical architecture. We support that principle, and Ukraine and the annexation of the Crimea are not an exception. We are nevertheless convinced that dialogue and diplomatic efforts, with the participation of Russia, will lead to sustainable peace in Ukraine. We must respect the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the sovereign right of its people to decide their fate in a free and independent manner. The United Nations plays a crucial role in that matter. What Ukraine needs today is to restore peace and stability, implement reforms and be reassured of the strength of the guarantees for the inviolability of its territory. Slovakia is ready to participate in that process.

Diplomatic language is full of allegories, but even the nicest language cannot hide the naked truth when people are being killed. Acts of barbarism and cruelty have become a freely available article. They are broadcast live to our homes. They make us insensitive to violence far away. At the same time, they create the feeling of having being born into an unsafe world, in which people ask: where is the effective protective umbrella of the United Nations?

A year ago, we could not imagine the sudden rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which has become a global threat in a short time. It has overshadowed the long-term effort of the international community in Iraq. The ideology and acts of ISIL represent an unprecedented level of brutality and the twisted use of the media for their self-promotion. It represents the dangerous ideology of forcing violent changes to State borders. It embodies ethnic and religious cleansing, which will not stop at the borders of Iraq, Syria or the neighbouring countries, but has the ambition to spread beyond the region of the Middle East. The entire global community has the responsibility to act in order to end the suffering of the innocent victims of violence and to protect children and women. Today, we must to stand united in Iraq and prevent ISIL from taking root in the territory it has occupied and from consolidating its military and economic power.

Autocratic and totalitarian ideologies always bring suffering, the restriction of rights, internal conflict, injustice and death. We are all too familiar with their ultimate price and catastrophic consequences. Among the many tasks facing the United Nations are the prevention of such ideologies from becoming successful, the protection of human rights, the adoption of every possible preventive measures to prevent conflict and the establishment of sustainable peace.

Slovakia, with its own first-hand experience of transitioning from a totalitarian regime to democracy, supports efforts to create the conditions necessary for sustainable peace. We promote security sector reform as one of the key factors for success in the peaceful development in regions emerging from conflict, as well as for States going through a regime change to democracy. Stable security institutions such as the police and military can better fulfil their duties to safeguard human rights and protect their citizens, especially society's most vulnerable members, including women and girls.

The Slovak Republic actively fulfils its commitments to Afghanistan. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan is led by a diplomat from Slovakia. We remain convinced that in the aftermath of the recent presidential election, the new Afghan leadership will be able to create the conditions needed to achieve national and social unity and to continue supporting international assistance. I am pleased to note that the two former presidential candidates have reached an agreement, and we believe that that will contribute to Afghanistan's stability. Slovakia is ready to continue to do its part in assisting the Afghan people in that endeavour.

Disarmament is key to eliminating potential sources of tension and conflict. Last year's signing of the Arms Trade Treaty was an important step towards establishing common legal standards for regulating and monitoring international trade in conventional weapons. The Slovak Republic was among the first 50 countries to ratify the Treaty, and we are hopeful that its implementation will contribute to eliminating the dangers of the illegal arms trade and thus strengthen global security.

Last but not least, peace, security and stability are preconditions for development. The rule of law, democratic governance and human rights are essential for every single citizen. But we must address, respond to and solve the global issues that may be as deadly for humankind as a nuclear war — the changes that are occurring on our planet. Globalization has created borderless opportunities for entrepreneurship, but it has also created new challenges that we must deal with if we are to make life on Earth sustainable — climate change, inequalities in development and in the distribution of goods and services, poverty and unequal access to health and education.

Slovakia is and will remain a responsible member of the global community. We participate in the discussion on financing sustainable development, offering our own experience of economic transition. Global challenges require global action and national responsibility. We are ready to do our share.

The peoples of the world have vested in the United Nations an exclusive and global responsibility: to respond to violations of peace, ensusre respect for international law, protect human rights and deal with threats to humanity. Let us all make sure that it is able to continue to carry out those responsibilities. For decades, the Organization has been the forum where we can name those responsible for the murder of their own citizens on a massive scale, the leaders who worship a cult of hatred and intolerance, and those who favour arms over agreements and international law. But in the cases where we have failed, our failure has caused the suffering and death of innocent people.

We, the United Nations, should not give up on the ideal of being the conscience of the world. Our Organization should be the authority with the ability to define, prevent and solve conflicts and problems. Together we must convince people around the world that we are safeguarding the international norms and principles that the United Nations is built on. If we fail to accomplish that within the United Nations itself, we will not be able to guarantee to humankind that totalitarianism, injustice, impunity and amorality will not prevail.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Slovak Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Andrej Kiska, President of the Slovak Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ghana.

Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mahama: Change has become an overriding theme in the language of today's social and political landscape. We speak of the need to change behaviours, attitudes and laws. We speak of the need to effect change in the areas of human rights and social justice, in education and health administration. We have come to understand the concept of change as a constant in our lives as human beings and as citizens of this world. But the question we are asking is, does change automatically signify progress?

There is an old saying with which I am sure everyone here is familiar: the more things change, the more they stay the same. Sometimes, when I find myself listening to reports of the many recent developments taking place in the world, that saying comes to mind again, and I am overcome with a strong sense of déjà vu, as though we had been here before.

When I hear reports about the taking of hostages and the savagery of beheadings, it is 2004 all over again, and week after week there is news of the killing of foreign hostages in Iraq. When I hear reports about Israel and Gaza, it is 2005 all over again, and Israel has launched Operation Summer Rain, immediately followed by Operation Autumn Clouds. The resulting death toll in the Gaza Strip was in the hundreds, and many of the dead were children. Similarly, in the United States, reports of police brutality against an unarmed black man take me back to 1999, when 23-year-old Guinea-born Amadou Diallo was shot 19 times by four New York City police officers, or to 1991, when Rodney King was brutally beaten by five Los Angeles police officers. Both of those incidents caused a tremendous public outcry, as did this year's shooting death of 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, with the singular message of "no justice, no peace".

Do such events indicate an outright regression? Does the uncomfortable familiarity of some current world events mean that, despite the changes so many individuals and organizations have worked to achieve, we have made little or no progress? I would like to believe that this is not so. I would like to believe those events of recent times are merely setbacks that will motivate us to find more sustainable solutions; they are just slight reversals on the sinuous path toward true progress.

Dag Hammarskjöld, who served as the second Secretary-General of the United Nations, from 1953 until his untimely death in a plane crash in 1961, said,

> "The pursuit of peace and progress cannot end in a few years in either victory or defeat. The pursuit of peace and progress, with its trials and its errors, its successes and its setbacks, can never be relaxed and never abandoned."

In the course of the past several months, since the beginning of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, I have been reminded of both the importance and the practicality of those words. True progress relies on neither victory nor defeat; true progress relies on persistence, on perseverance. Just last week, on Monday, in my capacity as the Chair of Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), I travelled to Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea — the three countries that have been most affected by the outbreak of Ebola. They are nations that are recovering from conflict. The civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone also adversely affected Guinea, which shares borders with both countries. They are nations that were struggling to rebuild their social and economic infrastructure. Even before the outbreak of Ebola, they were already operating with limited resources, an insufficient number of treatment facilities and a shortage of qualified medical personnel.

So far, there have been 5,843 recorded cases of Ebola, including 2,803 deaths. The World Health Organization predicts that if the disease is not brought under control, the number of cases could easily rise to 20,000 by as early as November. What makes Ebola so dangerous is that the virus dares us to compromise the impulses that exist at the very core of our humanity — our impulse to comfort one another with love, to care for each other with the healing power of touch and to maintain the dignity of our loved ones even in death, with a public funeral and a properly marked grave.

Ebola is a disease of isolation. It leaves family members afraid to embrace one another. It leaves health-care workers afraid to attend to their patients. It forces the living to abandon the cultural rites of washing, embalming and burying their dead. Instead, the dead are zipped into a secure body bag, carried on a stretcher by makeshift pallbearers in protective wear, and then tossed into a freshly dug grave.

Just as individuals with Ebola are often shunned and ostracized by their communities, the initial slowness of response by the international community in many ways has left the affected countries to suffer their fate alone and in isolation. In my travels to those three countries, although I was aware that some airlines had suspended flights, I was shocked to find the airports completely vacant. Ebola is not just a Liberian problem, nor is it a Sierra Leonean or Guinean problem; it is not just a West African problem. Ebola is a problem that belongs to the world because it is a disease that knows no boundaries.

We cannot afford to let fear keep us away or to let it compromise the very impulses that not only define but sustain our humanity. We must erase the stigma. To that end, my country, Ghana, has offered the use of its capital city, Accra, as a base of operations for activities geared towards the containment of the disease. I would like to commend Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Security Council for establishing the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response. I would also like to acknowledge and commend President Barack Obama and the people of the United States of America for their enormous commitment to the fight against Ebola.

Health officials have announced numerous times that in theory, it is relatively easy to stop the spread of Ebola because it is transmitted through contact with bodily fluids. It has been suggested that through changes in our behaviour and practices the public could potentially reduce, if not eliminate, their exposure to the virus. Yet in reality, the Ebola virus was able to spread so quickly throughout the West African subregion because of the fluidity of our borders.

The free movement of people, goods and services throughout the West African subregion is something that ECOWAS has been promoting for the last several decades. It allows interaction and increased trade between our 15 member States. However, without the proper preventive measures in place, such fluidity can also enable the free movement of disease, drugs, arms, human traffickers and terrorists.

Unfortunately, Africa is especially vulnerable to terrorism because its sheer size and vast terrain offers myriad places for terrorists to hide and create safe havens. With over 60 per cent of Africa's population under the age of 35 and a significant number living in extreme poverty, terrorists also have the opportunity to recruit new members by exploiting the ignorance and disillusionment of young people who lack the skills, education and opportunity to find gainful employment.

The proliferation of technology has made even the most remote areas of the continent accessible through a phone call or keystroke. What that does is facilitate communication within terrorist cells and between terrorist organizations. It would now be far too simplistic, not to mention myopic, for a nation to believe that it is dealing with any one terrorist organization, such as Boko Haram, Al-Shabaab, Ansar Al-Dine, Al-Qaida, Hizbullah, the Taliban, the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant or, recently, the Khorasan group. Because of the assistance and cooperation that exist among them, they have in fact become different tentacles of a single organism. So too must we come together as one cohesive body, united in our battle to defend our freedoms and values. We too must communicate within and among ourselves. We must cooperate and lend assistance and resources to fight and conquer the common threat we face.

Since the start of the global recession, economic growth rates have generally declined and people have, by and large, become pessimistic about their future. This month, the Pew Research Center published the results of a 44-country survey conducted in the spring of 2014 to assess public views of major economic changes in the world. According to the results, a global median of 69 per cent are not pleased with the way things are going in their countries. That includes both advanced and developing economies. The concerns expressed cut across a wide spectrum of issues, such as inflation, unemployment, income inequality and public debt.

My country, Ghana, is no exception. Over the past year, the public has seen an increase in the cost of living. Falling commodity prices led not only to a fall in tax revenues from companies that operate in Ghana, but they also led to a massive decline in our export earnings. That contributed to a general sense of macroeconomic instability and placed a great deal of pressure on our domestic currency, the cedi.

For the past 22 years, Ghanaians have witnessed a steady improvement in the circumstances of our nation. With the return of democracy and the rule of law, six successful elections and peaceful transitions of power, Ghana became an example for other African nations turning towards democracy and constitutional rule. The stability inspired investor confidence and increased growth. Soon Ghana was deemed one of the fastest-growing economies in the world.

That did not make us immune to the economic challenges that many nations were facing across the globe — quite the opposite. Instability in the global commodity markets has a direct bearing on our budgets and hence on our ability to finance our development. The global downturn exposed the weaknesses in our foundation. It alerted us to the need for change, the need to establish the proper institutions for effective economic management, institutions that will foster resilience and an ability to better absorb the blows of unexpected occurrences or outcomes.

The anxieties and concerns of the Ghanaian public are understandable. Like so many African countries, Ghana has been through dark economic times, and our seemingly changing fortunes, with their uncomfortable familiarity, brought on a fear of regression. But this was merely a setback, only a slight reversal. Already, the home-grown measures of fiscal stabilization that we have taken are yielding results. Only this month, Ghana surprised its most ardent critics when it launched its third Eurobond for an amount of $1 billion. That successful flotation represents a return of investor confidence in the prospects of the Ghanaian economy. That confidence is apparent in the recent rebound of our domestic currency, the cedi, which in the last two weeks has appreciated significantly against its major trading currencies.

Last year when I addressed the Assembly (see A/68/PV.12), I explained that it is not sympathy we want in Africa; it is partnership, the ability to stand on our own feet. In an attempt to establish such a partnership, we have entered into discussions with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), an organization that is no stranger to the process of self-assessment and the implementation of change in the pursuit of true progress. Indeed, both Ghana and the IMF have evolved, and the partnership has the potential to bring about the sort of transformation that will move Ghana from the ranks of the low middle-income countries into a fully fledged middle-income country.

The coming year will mark the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on

Women, which was held in Beijing in 1995. I would like to note with pride that it will also mark the fortieth anniversary of Ghana's establishment of the National Council on Women and Development, which has since been renamed the Department of Gender. Ghana has a long-held commitment to the betterment of women's lives, and my Administration has made it a priority to carry on with that tradition. In fact, much, if not all, of what we are doing falls directly in line with the areas of concern enumerated in the Beijing Platform for Action of the World Conference. My Administration boasts one of the highest number of women appointed to public office in the history of Ghana. Seven of our Cabinet ministers are women, as are the holders of several senior public service posts, and I hope that the fact that they are too numerous to list is an indication that we are reaching towards the ideal.

We have submitted to Parliament an intestate succession bill, which ensures that if a spouse dies without having written a will, the surviving spouse will not be dispossessed of their marital assets. We have also submitted to Parliament a bill on the property rights of spouses, which ensures that spouses are entitled to a fair portion of property acquired during the union. There area also several other pieces of legislation designed to offer protection for and empowerment of women, such as the Domestic Violence Act, the Anti-Human-Trafficking Act, an affirmative action bill and a gender policy.

I spoke earlier of isolation. Very few nations have experienced the sort of exclusion that Cuba has suffered for the last several decades as a result of the United States embargo on that country. Ghana reaffirms its position that this embargo should be lifted. Ghana also calls for a halt to the establishment of settlements in the Palestinian territories. We have consistently expressed our support for a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian question, with the two nations coexisting peacefully.

This year the world's attention has been drawn to the urgency of addressing the growing problem of inequality and the threats that it poses to our unrelenting pursuit of peace. I would also like to draw attention to the pervasive presence of religious intolerance. At the root of all of the world's major religions is the call for compassion, forgiveness, tolerance, peace and love. Nevertheless, the use of religious dogma and extremism as a weapon of violence persists.

In this age of terrorism and political turmoil, of national, regional and ethnic conflict, it may be tempting to use the actions of a few to justify prejudice toward many. It may be tempting to combine the faithful with the fanatical. But those of us who envision a just and peaceful world cannot, and should not, yield to those temptations. Time and time again, history has shown us that the changing of a world begins with the power that rests in the hands of the people, ordinary individuals. Or, in the words of one of the greatest teachers and leaders of non-violence, Mahatma Gandhi, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world".

Today our Jewish brothers and sisters are celebrating Rosh Hashanah, their New Year. To them, I say, "L'shana Tova." Next week, our Muslim brothers and sisters will be celebrating Eid al-Adha, the Festival of the Sacrifice. To them, I say, "Eid Mubarak." And, to you, Mr. President, I say, "Many thanks for the opportunity and for your kind attention".

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Ghana for the statement he has just made.

His Excellency, Mr. John Dramani Mahama, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rouhani (*spoke in Farsi; English interpretation provided by the delegation*): At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to extend my sincere congratulations on your well-deserved election as the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I also express my appreciation to His Excellency Mr. Ban Ki-moon for all his efforts. It is my genuine hope that this year's session of the General Assembly brings the world, in its current critical situation, a step closer to security and tranquility for human beings, which is of course a fundamental goal of the United Nations.

I am from a region of the world whose many parts are currently burning in the fire of extremism and radicalism. To the east and to the west of my country, extremists threaten our neighbours, resort to violence and shed blood. They do not speak a single language; they are not of a single skin colour and not of a single nationality — they have come to the Middle East from around the world. They do, however, have a single ideology: violence and extremism. They also have a single goal: the destruction of civilization, thus giving rise to Islamophobia and creating a fertile ground for further intervention of foreign forces in our region.

I deeply regret to say that terrorism has become globalized from New York to Mosul, from Damascus to Baghdad, from the easternmost to the westernmost parts of the world, and from Al-Qaida to Daesh. The extremists of the world have found each other and have put out the call: "Extremists of the world, unite". But are we united against the extremists?

Extremism is not a regional issue with which only the nations of our region have to grapple. Extremism is a global issue. Certain States have helped to create it and now fail to withstand it. Our peoples are currently paying the price. Today's anti-Westernism is the offspring of yesterday's colonialism. Today's anti-Westernism is a reaction to yesterday's racism. Certain intelligence agencies have put blades in the hand of madmen, who now spare no one. All those that have played a role in founding and supporting those terror groups must acknowledge their errors that have led to extremism. They need to apologize not only to the past generations but also to the next.

To fight the underlying causes of terrorism, one must identify its roots and dry up its sources. Terrorism germinates in poverty, unemployment, discrimination, humiliation and injustice, and it grows in the culture of violence. To uproot extremism, we must spread justice and development and not allow the distortion of divine teachings to justify brutality and cruelty. The pain is exacerbated when such terrorists spill blood in the name of religion and behead in the name of Islam. They seek to keep hidden the incontrovertible truth of history that, on the basis of the teachings of all divine prophets, from Abraham to Moses, from Jesus to Muhammad, taking the life of a human being is akin to killing all humankind.

I am astonished that those murderous groups call themselves Islamic. What is more astonishing is that the Western media, in line with them, repeat that false claim, which provokes the hatred of all Muslims. Muslim people, who daily recall their God as merciful and compassionate and have learned the lessons of kindness and empathy from their Prophet's teachings, see such defamation as part of an Islamophobic scheme.

The strategic blunders of the West in the Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucuses have turned those parts of the world into a haven for terrorists and extremists. The military aggression against Afghanistan and Iraq and inappropriate interference in the developments in Syria are clear examples of that erroneous strategic approach in the Middle East. As part of a non-peaceful approach, aggression and occupation target the lives and livelihoods of ordinary people. They result in various adverse psychological and behavioral consequences that are today manifested in the form of violence and murder in the Middle East and North Africa, even attracting some citizens from other parts of the world.

Today, violence is being spread to other parts of the world like a contagious disease. We have always believed that democracy cannot be transplanted from abroad. Democracy is the product of growth and development, not war and aggression. Democracy is not an export product that can be commercially imported from the West to the East. In an underdeveloped society, imported democracy leads only to a weak and vulnerable Government.

When commanding generals set foot in a region, do not expect diplomats to greet them warmly. When war begins, diplomacy tends to end. When sanctions set in, deep hatred for those imposing them also begins. When the atmosphere of the Middle East becomes securitized, there will be a similar response. The interests of Western countries in our region are tied to their recognition of beliefs and the desire of the people for democratic governance in the region.

The establishment of Al-Qaida, the Taliban and modern extremist groups has demonstrated that one cannot use extremist groups to counter an opposing State and remain impervious to the consequences of rising extremism. The repetition of such mistakes, despite the many costly experiences, is perplexing. Let us recall that Iran had invited everyone to dialogue before the criminal act of 11 September. We also called for a world against violence and extremism before the outbreak of the current violent atrocities.

In the past year, perhaps few people could have forecast the fire that rages today, but now uninhibited violence and extremism present an imminent threat to the world. It is self-evident that without an accurate understanding of the causes of the current situation, we will not be able to find the right solutions. Today, I shall again warn against the spread of extremism and the danger posed by the inadequate understanding of and incorrect approach to that phenomenon.

The Middle East longs for development and is weary of war. It is the natural right of the peoples of the fertile lands of the Middle East to live in peace and prosperity. In the past, colonialism denied them that right. Today, the shadow of war and violence threatens their security.

There are moderate politicians and elites in our region who enjoy the confidence of their peoples. They are neither anti- nor pro-Western. Aware of the role of colonialism in the backwardness of their nations, they do not neglect the role of their nations in reaching the development that they seek. They do not absolve the West of its misdeeds, but they are also aware of their own failings. Those leaders can assume positions of active leadership by attracting the confidence of the people in their societies and can establish the strongest national and international coalitions against violence.

The voices of such leaders are the true voices of moderation in the Islamic world. They represent the familiar voice of an Afghan weary of war, of an Iraqi victim of extremism, of a Syrian fearful of terrorism and of a Lebanese worried about violence and sectarianism. I believe that if countries that claim to lead the coalition do so to continue their hegemony in the region, they are making a strategic mistake. Obviously, since the pain is better known by the countries of the region, those countries can better form a coalition and agree to shoulder the responsibility of leadership in countering violence and terrorism. If other nations wish to take action against terrorism, they must come to their support. I warn that if we do not muster all our strengths against extremism and violence, and if we fail to entrust the task to those in the region who can succeed, tomorrow the world will not be safe for anyone.

Last year I tried to fulfil my country's role in the realization of peace at both the regional and international levels by putting forward a proposal about a world against violence and extremism, which met with general support. In the tumultuous and chaotic region of the Middle East, Iran is one of the most tranquil, secure and stable nations. All the nations of the region have to keep in mind that we are in the same boat. Thus, we need broad cooperation with regard to social and political issues, as well as security and defence issues, with a view to reaching common and durable understandings. Had we had greater cooperation and coordination in the Middle East, thousands of innocent Palestinians in Gaza would not have fallen victim to the aggressions of the Zionist regime.

We in the Islamic Republic of Iran consider interaction and confidence-building among the States of the region as fundamentally essential for conflict resolution. We support any measure to promote cooperation among Islamic nations to combat extremism and threats and aggression, and in that connection we are prepared to play our permanent constructive and positive role.

The oppressive sanctions against Iran go on, in continuation of a strategic mistake against a moderate and independent nation in the current sensitive conditions in our region. During the past year, we have engaged in the most transparent possible dialogue to build confidence regarding Iran's peaceful nuclear programme. We placed serious and honest negotiations on the agenda, not as a result of sanctions or threats but rather because of the will of our people. We are of the view that the nuclear issue can be resolved only through negotiation, and those who may think of other solutions would be commiting a grave mistake. Any delay in reaching final agreement only raises the costs — not only for us but also for the economies and trade of the other parties, as well as for the development and security prospects of our region. No one should doubt that compromise and agreement on that issue are in everyone's best interest, especially that of the nations of the region.

The nuclear negotiations between Iran and the 5+1 Group have continued during the past year and the past few months, with seriousness and optimism on both sides. According to all international observers, the Islamic Republic of Iran has carried out its commitments in good faith. Although some of the observations and actions of our counterparts have created certain doubts regarding their determination and realism, we hope that the current negotiations will lead to a final accord in the short time that remains.

We are committed to continuing our peaceful nuclear programme, including enrichment, and to enjoy our full nuclear rights on Iranian soil within the framework of international law. We are determined to continue negotiations with our interlocutors in earnest good faith and on an equal footing, based on mutual respect and confidence and on recognized international norms and principles, removing concerns of both sides. I believe that mutual adherence to the strict implementation of commitments and obligations and avoidance of excessive demands in the negotiations by our counterparts are the prerequisites for the success of the negotiations. A final accord regarding Iran's peaceful nuclear programme can serve as the beginning of multilateral collaboration aimed at promoting security, peace and development in our region and beyond.

The people of Iran, who have been subjected to pressures especially during the past three years as a result of continued sanctions, cannot trust any security cooperation between their Government and those who have imposed sanctions and created obstacles to their ability to satisfy even their primary needs, such as food and medicine. Sanctions only create further impediments to long-term cooperation in the future. The people of Iran are devoted to certain principles and values, at the apex of which are independence, development and national pride. If that obvious fact about the nation is not understood by our negotiating partners and they commit grievous miscalculations in the process, a historic and exceptional opportunity will be lost.

As the Assembly knows, during the ongoing nuclear negotiations this year, the Iranian Government took some initiatives that created favourable conditions, which resulted in the new phase, the Geneva Joint Plan of Action. We are determined to continue our confidence-building approach and transparency in that process. If our interlocutors are equally motivated and flexible, and if we can overcome the problems and reach long-standing agreement within the time remaining, then an entirely different environment will emerge for cooperation at the regional and international levels. That would allow for greater focus on some very important regional issues such as combating violence and extremism in the region.

Mrs. Al-Mughairy (Oman), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Arriving at a final, comprehensive nuclear agreement with Iran will be an historic opportunity for the West to show that it does not oppose the advancement and development of others and does not discriminate when it comes to adhering to international rules and regulations. Such an agreement could bear a global message of peace and security, indicating that the only way to attain conflict resolution is through negotiation and respect, not through conflict and sanctions.

Last year, the great nation of Iran broadly participated in the calm and impressive presidential election and endorsed the discourse of foresight, hope and prudent moderation. Thereafter, they support their elected Government in its effort in building the country. While some of Iran's neighbours have fallen prey to war and turmoil, Iran remains secure, stable and calm.

My Government's principled policy is to work towards constructive interactions with our neighbors on the basis of mutual respect and with emphasis on common interests. The notion that Iran seeks to control other Muslim countries in the region is a myth fanned in recent years in the context of an Iranophobic project. Those who make such claims need imaginary enemies to sustain tensions and sow division and conflict, thereby pushing for the redeployment of national resources away from development. We work to put an end to delusional Iranophobia, setting the stage for building strategic partnerships with our neighbours.

Last year I warned against the expansion of violence and extremism. This year too I warn that if the right approach is not taken in dealing with the issue at hand, we will get closer to having a turbulent and tumultuous region with repercussions for the whole world. The right solution to that quandary comes from within the region, not from outside, and must be a regionally provided solution with international support.

In the Holy Koran, God the Almighty has promised those who have believed and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession to authority upon the Earth and that their fears will turn into peace and security. It is my sincerest hope that our generation will endeavour to leave a more secure and developed Earth as its legacy for the next generation. I wish all present much success and many blessings.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hassan Rouhani, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Mohamed Moncef Marzouki, President of the Republic of Tunisia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Tunisia.

Mr. Mohamed Moncef Marzouki, President of the Republic of Tunisia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Moncef Marzouki, President of the Republic of Tunisia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Marzouki (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend my warm congratulations to Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa, representative of the friendly nation of Uganda, on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I would also like to express my thanks and appreciation to Mr. John Ashe and his team, as well as to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

In this world, where a surfeit of bad news overshadows the good work of creativity, reform and recovery, we continue our peaceful transition to democracy. We have managed to eliminate a dictatorial regime at the least possible human cost. We have begun a difficult transitional stage with a comprehensive national dialogue, and we have written a consensual constitution and built democratic State institutions. We are now preparing for legislative and presidential elections to be held before the end of the year in order to transform Tunisia into a stable, democratic, forward-looking State. Internal and external forces continue to undermine our democratic, peaceful transition through terrorist acts and political assassinations. However, our people are resolved to pursue their efforts to achieve success, despite the aggression of diabolical forces.

Tunisia today is a test for a peaceful democratic transition in an Arab country that lived for too long under despotism. We are attempting to reconcile democracy and political Islam. We are pursuing an ongoing national dialogue. We are distributing authority between secular modernists and Islamists. We are using moderation to grapple with the counter-revolution and to eliminate the residues of despotism through a just transition. We are also testing new socioeconomic approaches. We are promoting comprehensive development initiatives that will combat poverty and that will be in harmony with the environment. We have a broader social vision in line with the policies and vision of the United Nations with regard to addressing global warming, climate change and the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, as well as the Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative. We are also committed to our own policies that aim to achieve world peace, especially within the Arab world to which we belong, and on the African continent, where we seek to definitively overcome the past and look to the future.

Tunisia's development process is unfolding in the heart of a region that is currently witnessing political upheavals that, in some cases, have had painful consequences for us too. Transnational radical armed groups have since the beginning of the revolution been targeting us and have killed many of our soldiers and security personnel, hindering our security apparatus in an attempt to abort the drive for democracy and to impose alternatives rejected by the majority of our people.

The volatile situation in Libya is cause for concern because the stability of that sister neighbouring country affects our own stability. We hope that the Libyans will, through national dialogue, achieve an advanced, democratic stable State without outside military intervention, which would only add insult to injury. We encourage the wise men of Libya, both within and outside that country, to preserve broad national consensus and the security, unity, stability and prosperity of their country through a peaceful, political solution. We hope from the bottom of our hearts that our brothers will manage to achieve that.

We are concerned by the spread of violence on the eastern front of the Arab world, which has reached unprecedented levels of brutality, including decapitation, the chopping off of hands and the execution of prisoners. We are appalled by such violence and attacks on our Christian brothers and other religious minorities, who form an integral part of our Arab and Islamic heritage and culture. We are ashamed of such practices in the name of our Allah, who defines himself as the compassionate and the merciful. According to the Koran, whoever kills an innocent soul kills all humankind, and whoever gives a new life to such a person saves all humankind. That has happened all too frequently of late. Nothing can justify the indiscriminate violence at such unprecedented and horrific levels. We condemn the execution of prisoners, be they Arab, Muslim, French, American or British. We are all human beings and belong to one human family. We seek to understand this phenomenon so as to be able to address its root causes.

The violence and counter-violence we are witnessing today are the cumulative result of five decades of misguided policies of despotism that denied people their rights and basic freedoms, distributed wealth to some and consigned others to poverty. Such policies, which have exploited religion in the service of politics, are like magic that has now turned against the magician. They run counter to Arab and Islamic civilization. The problem cannot be solved by entrusting it to the police and army. The situation demands bold policies that take into account all those levels and that establishes regimes that are in harmony with their people. All political prisoners should be released and there should be an ongoing national dialogue with the participation of all moderate political sectors that are committed to peace. The economy needs to serve the interests of the majority, with an emphasis on advanced education under the banner of freedom and respect for the values of the Arab and Muslim countries. Only such policies will lead to united, peace-abiding societies. Our people yearn to improve their standard of living and to broaden the vistas for future generations.

For many decades, some of the major Powers supported despotic regimes in our country on the pretext of maintaining stability. If the same problems are not to be repeated, they must help to achieve internal reconciliation. Resorting to military solutions may lead to meaningless wars that could endanger the whole world. We therefore strongly call for the blockade of Gaza to be lifted in order to enable it to build a port and airport, and not just to open the border crossings but also to fulfil the political right of the Palestinian people to a geographically contiguous, secure, independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. The Gazans who are living without shelter are pleading to our consciences for the reconstruction of Gaza and return children to their destroyed schools' classrooms and playgrounds. We pray to God to end the nightmare engulfing the people of Syria through the banishment of its dictator and the formation of a Government of national unity.

Tunisia, as a Member of the United Nations, understands how important it is that the Organization be capable of dealing with such huge global changes. We support the granting of permanent membership in the Security Council to Brazil, Germany, Japan and India, to be followed by permanent-member status for an African country, to enable it to deal with the world of today, which is no longer that which existed at the end of the Second World War. That war ended with the defeat of fascism, dictatorship and Nazism and, eventually, Communist totalitarianism. While so much of today's world has been democratizing so rapidly, it is now threatened with climate, economic and political problems. To deal with them, every country must preserve its gains and create the machinery needed for prevention, protection and commitment.

It is good that we have the International Criminal Court (ICC) for punishing despots who abuse their peoples' rights; we should also have a tool that prevents them from surviving and staying in power. Tunisia has therefore proposed establishing an international constitutional court that could advise all liberated peoples and hand down decisions on illegitimate, bogus elections that lead to Government by force, which clearly runs contrary to international legitimacy and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This idea has been well received in academic circles and international symposiums. We reiterate our call for support for such democratic institutions so that this proposal can be presented to the Legal Committee.

We hope that an international court such as this can be realized and could enable us to deter despots, support freedom and democracy and eradicate the sources of violence and conflicts among peoples. I hope that establishing such a court will not require the decades that it took to bring about the birth of the ICC, and we hope that Tunis, our capital, can have the honour of hosting one of the United Nations institutions that have so far been the preserve of the advanced countries of the northern hemisphere. It is high time to give some thought to allowing the liberated cities of the South to host such institutions.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Tunisia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Mohamed Moncef Marzouki, President of the Republic of Tunisia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Colombia.

Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Santos Calderón (*spoke in Spanish*): First, on behalf of the Government of Colombia, I would like to congratulate Mr. Kutesa for his election to the presidency of the General Assembly and to express Colombia's support for his work in promoting a post-2015 development agenda that responds to humankind's current challenges. The sustainable development goals recently adopted after an open, transparent and inclusive negotiation process should be at the centre of that agenda.

In a world full of bad news, war, terrorism and disease, I would like to bring a ray of hope to the Assembly: that, after more than half a century of conflict, Colombia will soon enjoy peace. If we achieve this goal, which Colombians have unsuccessfully sought for so long, there is hope for peace anywhere in the world, despite how difficult things may seem right now. Today, I can say to the international community that we are closer than ever before to achieving that peace. The process that has been taking place in Havana over the past two years with the guerrilla group known as the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) has been serious, realistic, credible and effective and has produced concrete results.

We agreed on an agenda with five substantive points, of which we have achieved agreements on three: comprehensive rural development, political participation and the illicit drug problem. In the first of those areas, we have agreed to unprecedented investment in agricultural development, working to give farmers access to land and to generate a better standard of living for farming families. Regarding political participation, what we are striving for is very simple. We want to broaden our democracy in order to build peace and promote citizen participation, and to forever sever the link between politics and arms. Regarding the illicit drug problem, we have agreed to continue dismantling the drug mafia structures, promote a national crop substitution and alternative development programme and address the issue of consumption from a public health perspective. The agreement also includes a commitment on the part of FARC to contributing effectively to a definitive solution to the illicit drug problem and to ending any relationship it may have had with it.

A Colombia without coca and without conflict was an impossible dream just a few years or decades ago. Today, I can affirm that it is a real possibility. We have already begun discussions on the last two substantive points of the plan: the victims and the end of the conflict. This war has left in its wake millions of victims who never had a voice before and who are now at the centre of the process. We are working to fulfil the rights of victims to justice, truth, reparations and non-recurrence. Above all, we are working to ensure that there are no more victims.

In an act that I believe to be without precedent in the history of the world, representatives of the victims are explaining their situations, exposing their pain and setting out their expectations before the Government and guerrillas. The victims are the main protagonists and the main beneficiaries of the peace that we seek. Constanza Turbay, who represents the courage of our women and who lost most of her family at the hands of the guerrillas, had the opportunity to confront her victimizers, look them in the eye and to directly hear their expressions of sincere remorse. In her own words, Ms. Turbay stated that the victims are "replacing their pain with the hope of peace". Another woman, Ms. Juanita Barragan, who spent several years of her youth within the ranks of the FARC, was able to tell her former leaders in Havana: "Please do not enlist more children to fight your war". Today, Ms. Barragan wants to be a lawyer and to work for children. There are so many cases and so many voices that are finally being heard.

We have also created a subcommittee that includes active military and police personnel. This subcommittee is beginning to consider the details of a definitive bilateral ceasefire process, as well as the demobilization and disarmament of guerrillas upon signature of the final agreement. I can therefore now report to the international community that Colombia has made substantial progress in its effort to end the armed conflict that has affected us to such a great extent, and, inevitably, impacted the region and the world.

When the post-conflict phase begins, we will face immense challenges in reintegrating those who have demobilized, ensuring a State presence in conflict-affected areas, and guaranteeing civic security. The support and contributions of the international community are key in that regard, and we call for that support. I take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the many nations and multilateral agencies — especially the United Nations — for their commitment to the peace process and their willingness to provide all manner of support, not only now but also in the future as we implement those agreements in the post-conflict stage.

In my inaugural speech upon taking office for a second term as President of Colombia on 7 August, I stated the following, and repeat it today before the world's nations. While conflicts rage around the world, Colombia aspires to bring the good news for humankind that the final armed conflict in the western hemisphere is coming to an end. If we are successful, as we truly expect to be, we will be ready to share our experience with other countries. We are sure that our case can become a model and a beacon of hope for the world's other conflicts.

In Colombia, we seek peace because the suffering of our fellow citizens pains us. We do not want any more victims, or women or children involved in war. We therefore understand the pain of and express our solidarity with the many nations that today are suffering from war and unutterable atrocities, due — it must be said — to the impotence of the international community We are not oblivious to the suffering of those who live in such countries such as Syria, Iraq, Libya and Ukraine and in regions like the Sahel. We condemn the ruthless terrorism of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham. We are not indifferent to the suffering of the many families in Palestine and Israel who are victims of armed confrontations, or to the loss of life due to epidemics, such as Ebola in Africa.

As we approach the Organization's seventieth anniversary, we find ourselves at a defining moment in the consolidation of the international system embodied by the United Nations. Full respect for international law and the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter is essential to attaining lasting solutions to overcome conflict and achieve progress in fulfilling the legitimate aspirations of the people. In confrontations, we must restore the ethical principles that are fundamental to the human condition, and children, women and civilians must be spared such tragedies.

Colombia favours negotiated political solutions. Today, we must ask questions that are not only rhetorical but also true. Why are there people who stand against peace? Why do some see war as the only way out? Perhaps they do so because without war they would lose their power, accustomed as they are to making a living and profiting from it, and unable as they are to imagine life without it. We have to convince the promoters of war that this is not the way, and convert them into promoters of peace. We are doing just that in Colombia, and we must do the same in every corner of the planet. The United Nations was established precisely to prevent conflict and to seek peace.

Undoubtedly, the drug trade and drug trafficking are fuelling the conflicts in Colombia and elsewhere in the world. Colombia has promoted a serious, technical and objective discussion of the methods and results of the so-called war on drugs. This war has not been won, but we have had some success at the hemispheric level. Last week, at the Special General Assembly of the Organization of American States in Guatemala, we achieved hemispheric consensus on several positions and adopted a resolution that shows that we can move forward together on this issue. Those results will help us to be more prepared to be able to achieve progress at the United Nations special session on drugs that has been called for 2016.

Last month, in the inaugural speech of my second mandate, I set out for Colombians the vision that will guide our actions. I want to make Colombia a country of peace, a country with equality, and the most educated country in Latin America by 2025. At the same time, this vision also draws us towards the future sustainable development goals for the post-2015 period — ambitious goals that address humankind's most pressing social, economic and environmental problems.

The good economic climate that Colombia is experiencing, progress in the social indicators, particularly poverty reduction and job creation, and the peace process itself allow us to believe in the possibility of achieving this vision. It is this Colombia, the one that is overcoming poverty, has regained control of its territory, is growing at the world's highest levels and has successful social equality policies in order to find more fairness, which is also searching for peace.

I envisage the same things for Latin America and the Caribbean as I envisage for my country — that we can be a region at peace, with greater equality and better education; a region that makes the transition from resource-based economies to knowledge-based economies; a region in which entrepreneurship and innovation are the engines of development; a region with socially and environmentally responsible companies that transform our future.

As I said in the Assembly in 2010 (see A/65/PV.15), this should be the decade of Latin America and the Caribbean. And now, before the world's nations, I reiterate the call on my region, Latin America and the Caribbean, to remain true to that intention. To the international community, I make an impassioned appeal for us to put everything we can — everything — into ensuring that the sense of humanity overcomes war. We are losing our way when we look at the tragedies that humankind is suffering without being pained by them, without the world waking up and taking decisive action to address them. We cannot allow ourselves to lose the capacity to be shocked by war. It is time to wake up. It is time to act.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Colombia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Juan Manuel Santos Calderón, President of the Republic of Colombia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Madagascar.

Mr. Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana (*spoke in French*): Like my predecessors, I would like first of all, on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Madagascar and on my own behalf, to congratulate His Excellency Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. He is a credit to his country, the Republic of Uganda, and the pride of the entire African continent.

Allow me next to thank Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for his commitment to peace and development in the world and for his actions at the head of the Organization. I also take this opportunity to solemnly reiterate to him and his team the gratitude of the Malagasy people for the special attention and resources that the United Nations system has mobilized in order to contribute to the culmination of the process that brought the crisis in Madagascar to an end. We are also grateful for the important role that the United Nations continues to play in working together with Madagascar and its people. I naturally extend that gratitude to the entire international community, whose support has been decisive in the peaceful resolution of the Malagasy crisis.

By choosing to return to constitutional order through the ballot box, the Malagasy people confirmed its commitment to stability and security. In so doing, it is participating in building peace and security in the region and thus throughout the world. Strengthened by those values, we have made national reconciliation, which is the foundation of social cohesion, the cornerstone of our development policy. We are convinced that without social peace, there can be no development and vice versa. We have already taken important steps in that process and we intend to move forward. But our resources are not yet commensurate with the scale of the tasks that remain. That is why Madagascar wishes to gain access to the Peacebuilding Fund, which is being made available through the Organization.

Five per cent of the world's biodiversity is found in Madagascar. It behoves us, therefore, to take responsibility for preserving that resource and ensure better management for future generations. Upon taking office in January 2014, I declared war on traffickers in rosewood and all those who engage in the illegal trade in protected species. The establishment of good forest governance was the first act in a whole series of concrete measures to that end. An interdepartmental committee for restructuring the sector was established. The authorities are working hard to achieve the policy of zero tolerance against trafficking of all kinds related to natural resources and protected species. However, despite our efforts, we must note that traffickers still manage to evade surveillance measures, due to the lack of resources at our disposal to deal with traffickers, who have ample resources.

Madagascar's strategic location in the Indian Ocean, at the crossroads of various maritime routes that are vital to global trade, means that we must work to preserve our fishing areas and our marine reserves. The risk of piracy, terrorism and trafficking of all kinds is high. Measures must be taken in that regard, within the framework of an active international cooperation to protect the area.

The Malagasy Government has also increased the extent of protected areas to cover more than 10 per cent of the country, or at least 6 million hectares, with the cooperation of its partners. A large-scale reforestation project aimed at sustaining the long-term production of timber and firewood is included in the Government's agenda in terms of commitments. We are also strengthening our legal arsenal by ratifying several multilateral environmental agreements, including the Doha Amendment to the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

After over five years of political crisis, including sanctions and suspension measures of all kinds, it is clear that the majority of the Millennium Development Goals will not be met in Madagascar by 2015. However, the country is committed to focusing its development efforts on its population and has initiated major projects in some key sectors such as education, health, employment, security, access to new information and communication technologies and infrastructure. Thus, school enrolment for girls has far exceeded that for boys. Similarly, nearly 500,000 children and youth have been enrolled in educational and socio-professional institutions for the year 2014-2015. Over 100 basic health centres have been opened in recent months across the country. In the framework of our fight against malaria, Madagascar's efforts have been recognized at the continental level, including our achievement of 95 per cent of households owning at least one mosquito net impregnated with long-lasting insecticide and our intra-residential spraying campaign, which are the most important tools for the prevention of malaria. Moreover, Madagascar has demonstrated its solidarity with the world's fight against Ebola.

In terms of security, tangible results have been achieved in recent months with Operation First Strike, which is aimed at eradicating the massive theft of zebus in the south and west of the country. Finally, Madagascar's renewed adherence to the African Growth and Opportunity Act should give new impetus to the country's economic and social fabric with the massive job creation.

When it comes to climate change, the stakes are high for Madagascar, since our economy is based on developing sectors that are sensitive to climate change. The numbers are telling in that regard — 75 per cent of Madagascar's population lives in rural areas, of which 4 million are in vulnerable areas, and 28 per cent of the rural population are food-insecure. Although we do not have the means to adequately mitigate the negative effects of climate change on the country's socio-economic activities, we have nevertheless taken action. Measures range from the development of legal frameworks such as the national policy for the fight against climate change, the national strategy for a clean development mechanism and the establishment of an energy transition policy that is based on the use of renewable energy. We are also implementing a national action plan for adaptation and have created various structures to coordinate activities related to climate change.

We fully support the theme of this session, "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda". Our country is committed to creating the conditions to establish a prosperous and modern nation. That is the whole purpose of the actions we have undertaken on the basis of the principles of transparency, good governance, respect for the rights of others, democracy and human rights. With this vision of a modern and prosperous nation, our main objective is to allow the people to emerge from their precarious situation. To do so, we have decided on a policy of improving production to increase productivity and developing a reliable agricultural sector. That will help the country to achieve food self-sufficiency and allow Madagascar to become the backbone of food security in the Indian Ocean.

We have also decided to undertake major public infrastructure works, including structural work, the construction of highways and roads, works of art, building construction and embellishment, dams, water purification and improvements to the energy sector. In that regard, we are developing an innovative partnership for finance structuring and partnerships. In addition to conventional financing from traditional donors, we have used a public-private partnership system. It is aimed at establishing a mutually beneficial partnership for Malagasy and investors alike. Particular attention is being paid to promoting youth employment, and companies that fulfil the required conditions will benefit from strong incentives and tax benefits.

Another priority area is tourism. Tourist facilities are still limited in number and need to be developed. Madagascar today is the ideal destination for such investment, in particular in growth sectors. We must meet the challenges of growth and ensure that Government actions have a positive and tangible impact on the lives of the 22 million Malagasy through inclusive and sustainable development. Madagascar has adopted a transformative agenda for its future. The drafting of the national development plan reflects the determination of the State to establish the principles of good governance and economic recovery. The Plan is to be a central frame of reference for private-sector engagement with civil society, decentralized local authorities and technical and financial partners. The implementation of the national development plan will promote and ensure the security of domestic and foreign investment and the updating of regulatory frameworks relating thereto.

Before concluding, I reiterate my country's determination to renew and strengthen its commitments to the various activities of the United Nations, in addition to our effective participation in the regular work of the committees and in various conferences held under the auspices of the Organization. We point out the deployment every year of contingents from our national gendarmerie, national police and the Malagasy penitentiary administration within various United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa. Most recently, the Government of Madagascar has responded positively to the United Nations request for 140 officers in formed police units to serve in the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic.

Ms. Rambally (Saint Lucia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Madagascar also continues to advocate for equitable representation in the Security Council so that countries directly involved in crises and conflicts can fully take part in the process of the adoption of resolutions.

Madagascar aspires to move rapidly from its current status to that of a growing country with an expanding, vibrant middle class and that will see its income quickly rise to match those of emerging countries. I know that this is possible and achievable. I have made a moral contract with the people of Madagascar to optimize our use of our natural and human resources to enable our country to achieve a solid place within the globalization network, to rebuild itself and to contribute in a positive way to the resolution of the major problems of this world.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Madagascar for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hery Martial Rajaonarimampianina Rakotoarimanana, President of the Republic of Madagascar, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ivo Josipović, President of the Republic of Croatia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Croatia.

Mr. Ivo Josipović, President of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ivo Josipović, President of the Republic of Croatia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Josipović: The topic of this general debate, "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda", most fittingly depicts our common priority before the Organization's seventieth anniversary next autumn. We are about to set the stage for strategic decisions and concrete actions that should deliver comprehensive and transformational changes at the global and national levels.

Wars and armed conflicts, natural diseases, pandemic diseases, lingering poverty and many other existing or potential threats to human lives and human rights keep on emerging. If we do not react adamantly and swiftly to tackle those perils early enough in their emerging phases, we run the risk that they will increase exponentially and beyond our control. More than ever before, we must face the fact that security, development and human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. They demand to be at the very heart of the post-2015 agenda.

At this time, we are also witnessing a type of dangerous discord that spreads a fear of the worst possible outcome — the same kind of fear that preceded the birth of the Organization. The Charter of the United Nations provides us with so much wisdom; its words came with the experience of the scourge of war and misery. What we need at this point is to reinvigorate the same level of determination we had almost seven decades ago and to do everything we can to avoid regression.

Croatia is deeply concerned about the situation in Ukraine. There is none but a peaceful solution to the conflict. The suffering of so many people is unfortunately all too familiar. Croatia echoes the call to stop the violence and to reach a political solution. Croatia strongly supports the principles of international law concerning the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine.

Similarly, we share the grave concern over the terrorism and violence spreading around the world, most notably in the Middle East and Africa. The sheer magnitude of destruction, the loss of lives and unspeakable atrocities, most notably those committed by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham, can be overshadowed only by the growing threat that they will not stop soon or at any border, and that they will continue to grow and devour everything our civilization stands for. A zero-tolerance policy towards terrorism and a joint global effort are needed to prevent that from happening. Croatia supports all ongoing efforts to form a coalition against the so-called Islamic State. We stand ready to make a contribution to Iraqi and Iraqi Kurdish forces.

Also, although it is a difficult task, achieving a stable and sustainable peace agreement between Israelis and Palestinians is an imperative. We hope that honest and serious efforts will be resumed to negotiate a comprehensive and sustainable peace agreement that will establish the grounds for a two-State solution, living in peace and security, mutually recognizing and respecting each other, and gradually transforming the entire Middle East into a region of peace and cooperation.

The situation in the world brings the need for the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to the centre of our attention. In that regard, the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons will be of particular importance, and Croatia hopes that the Treaty will be reinforced and strengthened as an outcome of the Conference. Croatia also commends the unprecedented international effort aimed at the destruction of the chemical weapons of the Syrian Arab Republic. The Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Mission's successful work demonstrates the indispensable role of the United Nations.

It is truly unnerving to be confronted with the problems and crises that I have mentioned, while our very best effort is needed to overcome obstacles such as climate change, natural disasters and the scarcity and degradation of resources, especially food and drinking water. The crises are interlinked. Therefore, we need an interlinked and integrated response to them. Again, no serious thought can be given to sustainable development without ensuring peace and security.

Some conflicts could have been foreseen, prevented and even averted if the international community had acted in a timely and decisive way. While, indeed, the primary responsibility lies with the sovereign State itself, regional and global organizations have the tools, and therefore also the obligation, to assist those States. One effective method in that regard is peacebuilding, where we help post-conflict societies to stand on their own. There is a vast pool of global experience in peacebuilding that could be applied, including that of my own country. We therefore hope that the upcoming review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture will consolidate the existing knowledge and experience and bring fresh ideas as to how to improve the overall peacebuilding process.

A special role in maintaining peace and advancing development lies with women. In particular, we see the role of women in achieving successful conflict resolution and the sustainable development of post-conflict societies. We strongly advocate women's economic empowerment for peacebuilding and development. That is why we are organizing a high-level meeting at United Nations Headquarters on the gender dimension of sustainable development within the context of post-conflict recovery on 26 September.

This week, we started discussing climate change — the pressing issue of today. Croatia is as vulnerable as any other country. The devastating and unprecedented floods that we are witnessing now are proof of that. Yesterday, we all renewed our vow to boldly and ambitiously tackle that global issue, which is clearly of great importance. Croatia hopes that the upcoming Lima and Paris conferences will lead us to a global agreement in key areas, including climate financing and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. That remains one of the main pillars of the transformative post-2015 development agenda.

Bearing in mind the need for progress, we have committed ourselves to implementing the Millennium Development Goals. That is our unfinished business. The implementation and evaluation of the Millennium Development Goals have made us all conscious of the fact that such a vital process needs to be continued. Croatia is pleased that, in that regard, we have been building the truly transformative and people-centred framework of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Those goals represent the central investment in our common future. We must put the maximum effort into making the SDGs a reality and into supporting their continuous implementation at all levels. Those goals represent an opportunity for long-term development that humankind cannot afford to miss. In that vein, we have supported the importance of good governance and the rule of law as the enablers and an inseparable part of sustainable development. Everyone has a role to play: national Governments, international organizations, the private sector, civil society, academia, the media and the various other stakeholders.

A key principle that matters to my country is equality among all human beings, regardless of their beliefs, race, gender, national origin, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or other status. Croatia fully supports the pivotal role of the United Nations and its human rights mechanisms, in particular the Human Rights Council, on the two tracks, namely, to further develop and strengthen the protection of human rights and to effectively respond in a timely way to the challenges of the gross violation and systematic abuse of human rights worldwide. We firmly believe that sustainable development goes hand in hand with democracy, which should be approached in a holistic manner. That said, a number of international mechanisms ensure stable democracies and sustainable development by eliminating double standards, insecurity and impunity. We therefore add our voice to the calls for universal adherence to the Rome Statute and the universal jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court.

As I have already mentioned, we have recently witnessed all kinds of natural disasters. Such situations demand swift and prompt national and international actions, first and foremost, to mitigate the immediate threat, as the same time as taking care of victims and delivering humanitarian aid. The outbreak of epidemic diseases also has a similar effect. A recent example is the Ebola epidemic in some West African nations. It denotes a matter for solidarity and understanding and demands the world's immediate and comprehensive response to the multifaceted medical, social, economic and security crisis.

Croatia will continue to provide assistance to the most vulnerable people, especially considering that we have rich expertise in the area of capacity-building programmes in a humanitarian crisis, in raising awareness of the dangers of landmines and other unexploded ordnance of war and in providing psychosocial support to victims of violence. In addition, let me point out that Croatia was dedicated and active in delivering humanitarian aid to the flooded regions of its neighbouring countries of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina this spring, while we ourselves also faced grave floods and their consequences in Croatia. We all need more solidarity at the regional and the global levels.

One of the most important goals of my presidency has been and continues to be the promotion of dialogue and cooperation instead of conflict as a means of achieving security and stability for Croatia, as well as every other country in the world. I am proud to say that Croatia has come a long way in that respect.

With the World Summit in 2005, we started reforming the United Nations system. Despite all the progress made, we have not managed to achieve concrete results with regard to the reform of the Security Council. Moreover, we would like to see the Council more engaged in preventing crises and its ongoing dedication to its Charter duties rather than to any particular interest. In order to maintain the Council's authority, relevance and indispensability in maintaining global peace and security, its reform needs to be comprehensive and without further delay.

On numerous occasions, Croatia has stated its position on Security Council reform. In our view, the enlargement should happen in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories of membership, including one additional non-permanent seat for the Eastern European States. The enlargement is closely linked to the reform of the working methods of the Security Council, including the question of the use of the veto power. Croatia welcomes and supports the initiative to establish a code of conduct with regard to the suspension of the use of the veto in cases relating to a mass crime.

On another note, we strongly believe that the consolidation of the European space will be possible only through the further stabilization and security of South-Eastern Europe. We look forward to the day when all countries of the region will finally be admitted to the European Union. Croatia has been and will continue to be an advocate for a continuous and strong focus on South-Eastern Europe. The countries of the region are finding an increasing number of ways to cooperate together and to lay the foundation for the joint development of sustainable peace and stability, be it with regard to the recent devastating floods or to dealing with a difficult past, while achieving truth and justice on the issues of missing persons or of setting the stage for major infrastructure and transport projects.

In conclusion, allow me to address an issue that I personally believe can be one of the best remedies for achieving social improvement, economic advance and, consequently, political stability — education. That is why I strongly support the Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative. Knowledge and education are major driving forces of societies and one of the most important preconditions for success and sustainable development. Disparities in knowledge and its distribution, access and application have become major factors in determining the overall success of a nation and the level of its development. It is the best guarantee that the world's development and stability will go hand in hand and that global peace and security with thus become stronger than ever.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Croatia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ivo Josipović, President of the Republic of Croatia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by His Majesty Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di Pertuan of Negara Brunei Darussalam

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Sultan and Yang Di Pertuan of Negara Brunei Darussalam.

His Majesty Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di Pertuan of Negara Brunei Darussalam, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Majesty Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di Pertuan of Negara Brunei Darussalam, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah: Allow me to join earlier speakers in offering my congratulations to Mr. Sam Kutesa on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. My thanks also go to our outgoing President, Mr. John Ashe, for his excellent work over the past year, especially his contribution to the discussions on the post-2015 development agenda. I offer my profound appreciation to the many United Nations officials, peacekeepers and volunteers in the field who often work in the most difficult conditions and put their lives at risk.

It is also fitting to offer our thanks and gratitude to the Secretary-General and his team for tirelessly promoting the cause of this world body, especially with respect to urgent matters affecting the livelihoods and security of our peoples. I also deeply appreciate his personal support at the fifth summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the United Nations held in Brunei Darussalam last year.

Today is a special occasion for me personally and for Brunei Darussalam as a nation. It marks the thirtieth anniversary of our membership in the Organization. Looking back, the world then was ideologically divided. Now we are linked by globalization and interdependence, searching for a united approach to addressing the many challenges faced by the human race. As we confront old and new problems, I believe the United Nations is best placed to address them collectively. That is its strength, a fact that is evident today as we strive to realize the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

We are fast approaching the deadline of the MDGs, and we in Brunei Darussalam are pleased to see that there is concerted global commitment and consensus with respect to eradicating extreme poverty and further promoting peace and sustainable development. Brunei Darussalam actively contributes to regional and international efforts in the areas of training and capacity-building through the Initiative for ASEAN Integration and through collaboration with the United States in an English enrichment programme for ASEAN. Similar undertakings have also been carried out through the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation.

The work of the United Nations and its relevant stakeholders in leading the way forward beyond 2015 is indeed laudable. I am encouraged by the fact that we have accomplished a great deal in the current initiative. We have also learned many valuable lessons that will help carry us through our journey in the coming decades. It is reassuring to know that extensive discussions and wide-ranging consultations have been conducted to shape a universal framework for delivering and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda. I therefore welcome the new development agenda and its emphasis on the importance of a human development process that is inclusive, people-centred and sustainable.

Those elements are also integral to Brunei Darussalam's National Vision 2035, which is dedicated to improving the welfare of our people and ensuring a high quality of life. I am also pleased that there is unanimous agreement on the importance of protecting the environment. In that regard, I greatly value the convening of the United Nations climate summit to galvanize support for addressing the impact of climate change and in ensuring a dynamic and sustainable post-2015 development agenda.

However, the full realization of our noble expressions for the near future and the decades to come faces many obstacles. The international and regional situation continues to be threatened by instability, injustices, social and economic inequalities and increasingly frequent occurrences of natural disasters. While there is relative peace and stability in the world, developments over the past year have reminded us of how complex security issues can cause turmoil and instability that threaten progress in long-term development. We are gravely concerned with security developments in many parts of the world. Further escalation of conflicts can weaken the international community's resolve and ability to work together to achieve our worldwide initiatives.

For its part, Brunei Darussalam has participated in United Nations peacekeeping, specifically in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon and other international peace monitoring missions, such as our work in the southern Philippines. We remain committed to such endeavours.

The overall outlook is further complicated by challenges that are global in nature, ranging from the impact of climate change, extremism and terrorism to the serious repercussions of pandemic diseases. Brunei Darussalam stands united with the international community in combating terrorism in all its forms and in rejecting extremism. We support all regional and international efforts to counter terrorism, and we will continue to participate in global initiatives such as interfaith dialogues and dialogues among civilizations designed to promote understanding, tolerance and respect among world communities.

I call on every nation to take concerted action in working to ensure that the rapid pace of globalization and interconnectedness brings wide-ranging benefits to all our peoples and communities. In securing the positive aspects of globalization, as a community of nations we must work closely together. We must renew our approach to governance and strengthen our cooperation, especially in resolving new issues that require collective global action and unity of purpose. I would like to emphasize the importance of a comprehensive approach, especially when it comes to ensuring peace and security. Our peoples' quality of life can be further enhanced only through inclusive economic development and equitable social progress.

At the same time, all our efforts to develop our economies should not work to the detriment of our natural environment. These are areas that demand renewed commitment, partnership and creativity on the part of our global community. I would also like to underscore the importance of strengthening our capabilities in disaster management. The frequent recurrence and growing intensity of natural disasters in recent years have caused great destruction and hardship to many communities around the world. Last year, Brunei Darussalam hosted a humanitarian assistance and disaster relief exercise for military personnel from across the Asia-Pacific region, the first such event of its kind under the auspices of the ASEAN Defence

Ministers Meeting Plus process. During the exercise, I was very inspired as I witnessed the close cooperation and unity shown by the diverse range of participants from different nations, cultures and backgrounds, all striving together to practise saving lives.

Such regional efforts are just a modest step. More important, the fundamental principles of mutual respect and trust, putting aside differences, upholding the rule of law and justice and promoting cooperation should serve as the basis for resolving conflicts, so that we can all enjoy continued peace and stability. In the same spirit, I also hope that we can overcome our differences and move forward in further opening up global trade.

All our efforts to achieve the MDGs will be in vain if, at the same time, we disregard our commitment to pursuing peaceful means of settling disputes, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. The escalation of disputes and threats to international peace and security has resulted in appalling human tragedies such as the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17 and the current dire situation in Gaza. Although the prospects of all-out war seem remote today, instances of worsening situations, skirmishes and brinkmanship have shown us all too well how threats of conflict and violence remain an obstacle to our long-term aspirations for a better world. For Palestine, freedom and justice are long overdue. The cycle of suffering experienced by our Palestinian brothers and sisters is a stark example of how little our development goals mean if there is no peace or stability. The Palestinian people must be granted their basic right to live in dignity and enjoy economic development. We are encouraged by the observance of the current ceasefire by the parties involved, and I greatly appreciate the efforts of other countries that have made that possible.

Looking to the future, I remain hopeful. I still firmly believe that we need this Organization in order to ensure that generations to come will enjoy a secure and prosperous future. The world has changed fundamentally since the adoption of the MDGs, and I am confident that the United Nations will continue to be a source of hope. It is important that all States do everything they can to contribute positively to our Organization.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Sultan and Yang Di Pertuan of Negara Brunei Darussalam for the statement he has just made.

His Majesty Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di Pertuan of Negara Brunei Darussalam, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe.

Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mugabe: Allow me to congratulate Mr. Kutesa on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. We are indeed proud of the honour that has been bestowed upon the African continent as a result of his election. The theme he has chosen for this session, that is, "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda", is pertinent, appropriate and timely. It is relevant in our efforts to achieve a seamless transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals and the broader post-2015 development agenda. We look forward to having a candid and comprehensive debate on the challenges we continue to face at the domestic and international levels in our efforts to eradicate poverty.

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) helped to focus and mobilize global development efforts in order to achieve progress in the social sectors. However, despite the significant achievements within the framework of the MDGs, progress was uneven between goals, among regions and within countries. Consequently, we cannot remain complacent when some sections of the global community are marginalized or even left behind. We are therefore gratified that the proposed sustainable development goals have taken on board the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals. Part of that unfinished business concerns the critical issue of poverty eradication, which remains the greatest global challenge. That issue should therefore be the top priority and overarching objective of the development agenda for the future.

We in the Southern African Development Community share the view that the post-MDG agenda must be informed by national development priorities and that the new targets must better reflect local conditions. In that regard, Zimbabwe adopted its own economic blueprint, the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation. It is a bold and achievable development programme that has the objective of ensuring inclusive economic growth, decent jobs for all, affordable and reliable energy, food security, sustainable agriculture and the development of reliable modern infrastructure. Through the programme, we also aim to expand the industrial base, which is key to the sustained overall economic development and human development of our country. We continue to push for the leveraging of our diverse and abundant resources through beneficiation and value addition. We therefore expect that the proposals in the sustainable development goals, which complement those elements of our national aspirations, will be endorsed and integrated into the post-2015 development agenda framework.

Social justice, political stability and sustainable development in African countries can best be achieved through genuine and committed support for the ownership of means of production that favour the poor, who are in the majority. In Zimbabwe, my Government has gone a long way in laying the foundation for sustained food production through our land reform programme. The majority of the rural people have been empowered to contribute to household and national food security. The possession and exploitation of land has also turned them into masters of their own destiny, thus giving true meaning to our national independence and unquestioned sovereignty.

Because Zimbabwe has thus been preoccupied with the empowerment of its people economically, it has become a victim of the evil machinations of Western countries, namely, the United States and States members of the European Union, which continue to apply unilateral and illegal sanctions as a foreign-policy tool to achieve short-term political objectives, particularly regime change. Regime change is a diabolical and illegal policy of interference in the domestic affairs of my country, and no good can come from undermining our economy or depriving our citizens of the necessities of life. Why, I ask, should Zimbabweans continue to suffer under the American and European yoke of unjustified and unwarranted illegal sanctions? Those evil sanctions violate the fundamental principles of the Charter of the United Nations and should be condemned by the international community. We once again call for their immediate and unconditional removal.

We are a peaceful and peace-loving nation, ready to engage in constructive dialogue for mutually beneficial relations. We call on those who continue to harbour ill will against us to cast away their hegemony-driven hostility, as we appeal to them to review their hard-line and cruel positions and open a new chapter in their relations with us based on mutual respect and friendly cooperation.

To support the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, we call for an expeditious reform of the Bretton Woods institutions, particularly their governance structures. It is high time that we addressed the democratic deficit in those institutions and improved their legitimacy. Those reforms must reflect current realities and ensure the full voice and participation of developing countries in the decision-making and norm-setting activities.

Zimbabwe firmly believes that the United Nations should promote dialogue to achieve peace, the rule of law and common understanding among States. The peace, security, stability and welfare of Africa and our subregion is vital for us. In Africa, the African Union is working tirelessly to push for peace in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, the Central African Republic and Somalia. The international community must remain intensively engaged and support Africa in the maintenance of peace and stability, thereby enhancing its peacekeeping-capacity needs through training and logistical and financial support. Africa also remains seized of the issue of Western Sahara, the last colonial vestige in Africa. The United Nations should not shake off its responsibility to ensure the realization of self-determination by the people of Western Sahara.

We continue to witness the suffering and persecution of the people of Palestine at the hands of Israel. We have witnessed the callous murder of women and children in shelters, where they seek refuge from Israel's bombs. We have witnessed the brutal and random destruction of infrastructure in the Gaza Strip. While those heinous acts were being perpetrated by Israel, the so-called civilized world maintained a deafening silence. And we ask, why?

Lasting peace in the Middle East can be achieved only through a two-State solution based on the 1967 borders. Any other manoeuvres to change demographic realities through settlements or the use of force will only prolong the suffering of the Palestinians.

In conclusion, as we move forward, it is important to muster the necessary political will to create a development-oriented international environment that facilitates the eradication of poverty and enhances the sound management of our natural resources for economic and social development, under a renewed and real global partnership.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Robert Mugabe, President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ollanta Humala Tasso, President of the Republic of Peru

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Peru.

Mr. Ollanta Humala Tasso, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ollanta Humala Tasso, President of the Republic of Peru, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Humala Tasso (*spoke in Spanish*): My Government warmly welcomes the theme proposed for this debate regarding the post-2015 development agenda, since it directly addresses the most pressing problems facing humanity, namely, inequality, hunger, poverty, injustice and underdevelopment, factors that create situations that our community of the United Nations cannot and should not tolerate. We must address our task decisively, and in doing so we must be guided by the principles set forth in our Charter, but above all, we must have the firm commitment of all members of the international community. Our peoples, who are calling for the implementation of a truly transformational global development agenda, expect nothing else from us.

In that regard, I wish to point out that, by virtue of the universal, comprehensive and ambitious nature of our goals, the consensus achieved so far in the effort to define the sustainable development goals of the post-2015 development agenda constitutes an essential point of departure for that purpose. In that regard, I think that the process in question deserves our strong support and must be allocated the requisite resources in a timely manner to ensure full implementation. Consistent with that principle, Peru fully supports this process and is confident that the adoption next year of the post-2015 development agenda will lead to the establishment of a genuine global partnership for sustainable development. The process will have participatory monitoring mechanisms so as to ensure appropriate follow-up and monitoring.

I wish to highlight that a clear-cut convergence exists between the guidelines promoted by Peru through its public policies on social inclusion and the goals agreed upon by the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. In both cases, priority is placed on initiatives to reduce poverty and inequality in all its forms, and to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, once and for all. Similarly, emphasis is placed on the struggle for equality, the empowerment of women, access to quality education and the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence and violence against children. It is also worth highlighting the importance of continuing sustainable economic growth and promoting formal and decent employment. Those issues, among others, are of vital importance to Peru.

To that end, we must reflect on what type of State we have today and move forward to meet the challenge. In the case of Peru, we are pleased to highlight that we have implemented a set of State reforms geared towards attaining those objectives. Peru has been working hard to consolidate and build upon the foundations for sustainable development. Our nation is a clear example of how it is possible to achieve substantial progress in just a few years, without straying from the fundamental principles of the Charter, such as peace and security, human rights and development. In fact, Peru is one of the countries that has made the most sustained progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, some of which will have been attained even before the 2015 deadline. Thus, thanks to economic growth and a coordinated and comprehensive social policy, we have achieved significant progress in fighting poverty, given that we had set ourselves the goal for 2016 — the end of my term in office — to reduce that figure to under one fifth of the population.

In just one generation, Peruvians have implemented a deep transformation based on the pacification of the country, the consolidation of democracy, stability, the opening of its economy, as well as the creation and development of a social inclusion policy. That is precisely why our aspirations, objectives and goals are increasingly ambitious.

With that perspective, we see ourselves as an emerging country with strong institutions that is proud of its cultural diversity and of the skills of its people. We have made significant progress in the reduction of poverty and child malnutrition. Our country is built on an inclusive social platform that promotes equal opportunities, gender equality, justice and security.

My Administration is undertaking extraordinary efforts in that direction and has prioritized its action to focus on the fields of health care, education, security and social welfare. On previous occasions, I have talked about the body of first- and second-generation social programmes that we have been implementing, among which Qali Warma, which provides free meals in public schools, Juntos, a conditional cash-transfer programme, Pension 65, a non-contributory pension plan, and the Beca 18 scholarship programme are worth highlighting. All of those programmes are coordinated under a multisectoral strategy that prioritizes the human being and the family throughout their life cycle. That strategy, which we call "include to grow", is intended not only to alleviate the immediate needs of the poor and extremely poor people but also to build the capacities of individuals and to create opportunities for all.

The Government of Peru has been increasing its budget for investment in social policies annually, reaching unprecedented figures. By way of example, I can point out that the budget for 2015 has increased by 12 per cent over that of last year, and that approximately half of that increase has been allocated to education and health care. The remainder is primarily for the expansion of social programmes, the development of infrastructure and the improvement of public safety, since public safety is another major priority of my Administration. Given that challenge, we constantly monitor citizens' demands and organize State action to effectively address those requests robustly and effectively in order to generate the climate of peace and trust much needed by our families.

Historically, Peru has faced another impediment to development: corruption. That is why we are taking drastic measures against those people who, in shameful exercise of their duties and public functions, betray citizens' trust. In that regard, in Peru, we are implementing a concept of education and public and political ethics to be followed not only by those who govern Peru but by all citizens, with a major emphasis on those who implement and enforce the law. We are also considering barring from public office for life those who commit acts of corruption while carrying out their public duty.

I would now like to talk about another major challenge that we must overcome, namely, the world drug problem. I would appeal to the international community to continue to strengthen dialogue and cooperation so as to counter that scourge. We therefore believe that the special session of the General Assembly will be an opportunity for the international community to jointly address that issue in a cooperative way. The scope of the threat is clearly global, and our response must incorporate that dimension. We have given priority to a comprehensive strategy to implement alternative development and to support social inclusion programmes. In that way, we are regaining not only the territory but also, most importantly, the people.

However, in order to ultimately overcome that challenge successfully, all relevant actors must participate actively. The joint and shared responsibility of producers and users, as well as the transit and financing countries, must facilitate the establishment of a comprehensive strategy, in which all those involved assume their responsibilities and adopt binding solutions.

On the economic front, the recent adoption of a national production diversification programme to expand our production base, bring about a historical change in the country's economic structure and create formal employment seeks to leverage our capabilities and resources by promoting sustainable industrialization, entrepreneurship and access to science and technology. We are thereby adding value to our production and making our growth and development sustainable.

We seek to continue expanding and deepening our trade relations, improve the existing 17 trade agreements that cover approximately 95 per cent of our foreign trade, while also moving towards the completion of the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization. Peru's aspiration to a more integrated world is widely recognized. We therefore give particular priority to any participatory forum, such as the Pacific Alliance, which is an initiative that promotes the free movement of persons, goods, services and capital and cooperation among its members, as well as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation. That aspiration also includes the right of all countries to achieve the highest level of social, economic and trade development. We therefore reiterate once again the call to end the economic blockade against Cuba, which affects that country's economic growth and delays its social and human development and has an impact on the welfare of its citizens.

Peru's relationships with its neighbours are excellent. I wish to highlight the recent settlement of the maritime dispute with Chile, achieved on the basis of international law and the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes, as well as the fact that the handing down of the ruling of the International Court of Justice was the fastest in its history. In general, the way in which the entire case was conducted makes Peru and Chile an example for the world.

Peru affirms its active participation in the international community. In that context, we will be the host country for the twentieth United Nations Climate Change Conference in December. On that occasion, the discussions will be important but national commitments will be essential. Today, I say that we need to organize the largest alliance in history to address that critical challenge, in which the agreements reached will define the future of our civilization. As the host country, I urge the heads of State and Government to maintain their political will, so as to move forward constructively with representatives that have the capacity to take decisions. It is not only a matter of capitalizing on the Green Climate Fund but also one of clearly setting out national commitments and achieving a binding agreement.

We must be conscious that, for the first time, humankind has achieved the capacity for mass destruction without resorting to nuclear energy. In that regard, it is vital that the international community become aware that world problems, such as climate change, require global, rather than national, responses. According to a 2011 study by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the cost of global warming to Peru is revealed in floods, droughts, thaws and warming waters and amounts to approximately 4 per cent of Peru's annual gross domestic product (GDP). If we do not take immediate action, the economic impact of climate change could be over 5 per cent of GDP by 2030 and 20 per cent by 2050. Peru also recently ratified the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from Their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity, which will soon be in force to promote such genetic resources.

Today's general debate finds us in a complex scenario with various severe political, humanitarian and economic crises. We are faced with major global economic challenges regarding international security and global governance. The Security Council's ability to respond to the various crises around the world has revealed the need to reform its work methods, including those related to the use of the veto. The Security Council needs to respond in an effective way to those situations, which requires comprehensive reform, including increasing the number of permanent and non-permanent members, making that body more efficient, democratic, transparent and representative.

Specifically on the Palestine issue, my Government confirms the need to address the root causes of that conflict through negotiations to achieve a viable and lasting solution, overcoming the status quo and enabling Palestinians and Israelis to live in peace and to prosper in the two States with secure and recognized borders.

The international community faces various ever-growing phenomena that transcend borders. I am referring to terrorism, transnational organized crime, the global drug problem, corruption, trafficking in persons, sexual exploitation, trafficking in young boys and girls and in adolescents, and arms smuggling, among others. With regard to acts committed by terrorist groups all over the world in recent months, my country knows the consequences of such acts very well, and they have been most energetically rejected by my Government.

Combating terrorism is a responsibility that the international community must assume within the framework of the law, with full respect for the fundamental rights of all peoples and the sovereignty of States. Regarding the condemnable events that have occurred in several regions of the world, the Government of Peru has expressed its strong rejection of such barbaric and terrorist attacks by extremist groups against the lives of innocent civilian hostages and religious and ethnic minorities. Those intolerable events deserve the firmest condemnation by the international community.

Peru is not just a country with its own history; it is also a civilization. Its culture is part of the world heritage of humankind, as recognized by UNESCO. That recognition signifies a universal recognition of the extraordinary work of our ancestors, who knew how to harmonize development and the environment in a sensible and creative way.

I would like to conclude by reiterating Peru's commitment to the development and implementation of the post-2015 agenda, focusing on sustainable development goals, and by reiterating my call to allocate the means required to make them a reality. In the context of the upcoming Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP-20) in Lima, I wish to reiterate my commitment and that of the Peruvian Government to the Conference objectives, and we call upon the international community to participate actively with a constructive spirit for sustainable development in the interest of our peoples. Peru, the cradle of the Inca civilization and the international capital of excellent gastronomy, is ready to welcome everyone.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Peru for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ollanta Humala Tasso, President of the Republic of Peru, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

General debate

Address by Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Japan.

Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Abe (Japan): Humankind faces serious, unprecedented crises. Now is the time for us to stand united beneath the flag of the United Nations to confront those crises together. Japan is resolved to continue to take on great responsibility, working hand in hand with the international community.

The Government of Japan is expending its best possible efforts in the fight against the Ebola virus. The international community should come together to address that crisis, which directly affects the peace and security of Africa. In that regard, Japan, as one of its sponsors, has strongly supported the adoption of Security Council resolution 2177 (2014). Japan has also supported the initiative of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and His Excellency Mr. Sam Kahamba Kutesa, President of the General Assembly, to establish the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response.

At the fifth Tokyo International Conference on African Development, held in Japan in the past year, the Government of Japan announced that it would set aside $500 million to address health issues in Africa and launch training programmes for some 120,000 health and medical-service providers. As a response to the Ebola outbreak, we have sent highly knowledgeable and experienced Japanese experts, as members of World Health Organization missions. We have also extended a total of $5 million in financial assistance and will provide $500,000 worth of personal protective equipment for health-care workers. Furthermore, we pledge to extend additional assistance totaling $40 million in future. We continue to be prepared to take any other measures, including the possibility of sending more experts to Africa and sharing a potentially promising drug developed by Japan's Toyama Chemical Company and Fujifilm Holdings Corporation, which could be effective in the post-exposure phase of Ebola.

The Middle East is in a state of unrest. In particular, Japan regards the activities of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant — which extends across national borders and has unilaterally declared the establishment of a so-called state — as a serious threat to international order. What is important now is to prevent extremism from taking root, while responding swiftly to the region's humanitarian crises. To assist in that, Japan will provide $50 million of emergency assistance right away.

Placing great importance on the stability of Ukraine, in March Japan swiftly announced economic assistance of up to $1.5 billion, which is now being implemented. We are also preparing new assistance towards reconstruction of the eastern part of Ukraine.

Next year will be a momentous one for the United Nations. We will celebrate its seventieth anniversary. At the time the United Nations was founded, Japan was recovering from having been reduced to ashes. Since then, Japan has never for a moment forgotten the horrors of war. It set out on its post-war path abhorring the atrocities of a war that brought tragedy to innocent people both at home and in other nations and renewing its pledge towards peace. We have made a wholehearted commitment to shoulder United Nations responsibilities at home and abroad.

Japan's future lies in a straight extension of our history over the past 70 years. Our pledge to never wage war will be handed down and fostered by the Japanese people for generations to come. Peace will take root only when conflicts are deprived of places to reside within our hearts and our way of life. That is precisely why Japan is working to continue taking action at the grass-roots level around the world. Japan has been, is now and will continue to be a force providing momentum for proactive contributions to peace.

Moreover, I wish to state and to pledge, first of all, that Japan is a nation that has worked to eliminate the war culture from people's hearts, and it will spare no effort in continuing to do so. As early as the mid-1980s, Japan launched cooperation in Gaza to foster human resources. A total of more than 400 administrative officials and technical experts have come to Japan to receive intensive training. One of them is Mr. Najjar Osama, a young man serving as an official with the Palestinian Energy and Natural Resources Authority. He said:

> "Gaza has no natural resources whatsoever. The only thing we have is people, a situation the same as Japan's. What I learned in Japan is the spirit of never, ever giving up."

After being educated in Japan for a month, Najjar Osama brought solar-power technology back to his hometown, to be attached to the facility in greatest need of a stand-alone power system. The equipment that he and his colleagues introduced to the largest hospital in the Gaza Strip has endured the unrest and kept the lights on in the hospital's emergency room.

It is perhaps more than just a coincidence that the Somalia story I wish to tell also relates to lighting. The most important thing for Hamidah Hassan — a girl 10 years of age, living in the camps for internally displaced persons in Mogadishu — was lighting to illuminate the camp's tents at night. A lit tent acts as a deterrent to sexual violence. Over the past two years, Japan has distributed to internally displaced persons, including young girls such as Hamidah, some 2,500 small lanterns, made by Panasonic, that bank electricity generated from sunlight during the day and convert it to lamplight at night. Hamidah is now working hard, dreaming that one day she will become a doctor.

We must continue to clear away anxiety and fear from people's hearts and cull any shoots of hatred. Japan and the Japanese people will continue to do our best to offer our own willingness and capacity, knowledge and experience, in order to make that a reality. First and foremost, we will continue to assist in enhancing education, which will form the basis of economic growth for those who need it, from primary education to vocational training. Our aim, always, is to internalize the joy of work in people's nature. We hope for people to keenly realize that the sweat brought about by their labour is an investment in the future.

Expanding roads, ports and the increasingly connected power grids, together with effective governance that is fully in step with those improvements, will help to bring about an affluent and peaceful society that values human rights. When that concept receives broad-based support, people become the owners of their society in the truest sense of the word. To expand that kind of society from a point to a line, and from a line to a plane, Japan has always sought foundations of peace. We have always focused our official development assistance philosophy on that approach.

The banner of a proactive contribution to peace borne by the Japanese Government is a flag planted atop the natural development of conviction and self-confidence that we have acquired through many years of promoting human security, that is, working as hard as we could for the development of a society that places people front and centre. We will carry on with our work, hoping to create, in time, a fair and just society that places human beings front and centre and a democracy that values human rights.

Seventy years ago, the United Nations proclaimed its determination "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" and to "practice tolerance". The United Nations must not depart from those ideals. It is with exactly that determination that Japan aspires to join the Security Council once again as a non-permanent member next year, marking the seventieth year since the start of the United Nations.

Over the 58 long years since Japan became a Member of the United Nations in 1956, as its eightieth Member, Japan has worked tirelessly for the causes of the United Nations. We believe that our efforts have been second to none. It is my wish, with the seventieth anniversary as a turning point, that countries sharing the same aims can all work together to finally resolve the long-standing issue of the reform of the United Nations in a way that reflects the realities of the twenty-first century. In that context, Japan seeks to become a permanent member of the Security Council and to take on an appropriate role that the status requires.

It was on the same occasion last year that I spoke of the significance and importance of enhancing the power of women and appealed for us to create a society in which women shine (see A/68/PV.12). Japan has now begun to work towards resolving the numerous issues we face, together with private industries, in order to increase women's participation in society as soon as possible. We must foster environments in which it is possible to balance child care and nursing care on the one hand and work on the other. In addition, eliminating biases about the roles of women that still exist in society will be basic, more so than anything else.

We have just held a large-scale international conference with an aim of promoting the dynamic participation of women. With an eye set on economic development and the resolution of global issues, about 100 leaders from all sectors of society from around the world sent out a message to the world of their commitment to bringing the power of women to fruition. In less than a year, the empowerment of women has become a guiding principle that has driven Japan's policies both domestically and overseas. Japan has focused on advancing the status of girls and mothers in Africa, a region that receives emphasis within our foreign aid.

The twentieth century had a history of profound harm to women's honour and dignity when conflicts broke out. Around the globe, we still find abhorrent circumstances in which women are denied access to such basic services as medical care and education merely because they were born female, thereby depriving them of opportunities to become self-reliant. Japan seeks to be a country that walks alongside such women throughout the world. We intend to encourage and support, throughout the world, the self-reliance of women whose hearts have suffered grievous harm.

We intend to make the twenty-first century a world without human rights violations against women. Japan will stand at the fore and lead the international community in eliminating sexual violence during conflicts. Therein lies the reason for Japan to reinforce its cooperation with Ms. Zainab Bangura's Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Fundamental rights such as education and health must be ensured everywhere throughout the world. It is necessary for the United Nations and, indeed, the world to come together as one to take action so that girls and boys can attend school equally and that expectant mothers can receive medical care with peace of mind. Moreover, in order for women to lead lives full of pride and hope, I consider it essential to develop their ability to be economically self-reliant, above all else. I do not have the slightest doubt that the creation of a society in which women shine holds the key to changing the whole of society.

Last year I pledged in my address here, before the General Assembly, that Japan would implement assistance in excess of $3 billion over three years, aimed chiefly at advancing the status of women. The amount already implemented over the past year is $1.8 billion, more than half the amount pledged. I also stated Japan respected the activities of UN-Women, which is responsible for women's issues within the United Nations, and that we intended to become one of its leading contributors and thus a model country in that area. Over the past year, Japan increased its contributions to UN-Women fivefold, and in the future we will further increase the number of projects we support. We are also very pleased that next year UN-Women will open its Tokyo office. I expect that Japan will further enhance its coordination with the United Nations through that new office.

As we draw up the post-2015 development agenda, Japan will continue to be as strongly involved as it has been to date. However, I strongly urge that if we are to truly attain inclusiveness, sustainability and resilience, as put forth in that agenda, then protection and empowerment of the vulnerable, irrespective of race, gender, or age, is important.

This year Japan marks the sixtieth anniversary of the start of its official development assistance (ODA). Having learned from the determination of our predecessors, who began working to extend ODA a mere nine years after suffering total devastation in war, the Government of Japan is now in the process of establishing new guiding principles for our ODA. We intend to once more emphasize as priorities objectives such as high-quality economic growth, ensuring rule of law and realizing a peaceful and stable society.

The objectives that Japan has continuously targeted through its ODA over those 60 years will not change in the slightest. There will be no change in our deeply rooted approach in which the most important thing in the fight against poverty is to cultivate a sense of ownership among the people concerned and to encourage self-help efforts. Nor will there be any changes in our efforts to fully ensure human security. Moreover, as we pursue enhancing women's empowerment as the leverage point, I consider the attainment of our goals to be that much nearer.

Over the past 20 years Japan has sent about 9,700 people on 13 United Nations peacekeeping operations. In the 10 years since the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission, Japan's contributions to the Peacebuilding Fund have surpassed $40 million. In the future, we intend to cultivate still further our human resources in terms of both quantity and quality, to contribute to the area of peacebuilding.

As the only country ever to have suffered the devastation of atomic bombings during wartime, Japan is prepared to lead discussions in the Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons to be convened next year — the seventieth anniversary of the atomic bombings.

With regard to North Korea, Japan will work in coordination with relevant countries towards the comprehensive resolution of outstanding issues, including abduction and nuclear and missile issues.

Japan has been among the biggest beneficiaries of the United Nations. Going forward, we will work harder than ever to bring about realization of the principles set forth by the United Nations. Japan is a nation that implements its pledges without fail. With that, I will end my discussion.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Japan for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Dessalegn (Ethiopia): It is indeed a great pleasure to see a seasoned African diplomat presiding over the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. I would like to express my warmest congratulations to him on his election to that high office. I know he is aware, as we are, that he is assuming his responsibility at one of the most critical periods in the history of this Organization and that of multilateralism in general. Those of us in the East African region know him very well as a friend and distinguished diplomat. We are confident that he will use his wisdom and experience to build consensus on a range of issues on the agenda of the General Assembly at this historic session and effectively guide its work. Let me therefore assure him of the full support and cooperation of my delegation in the successful discharge of his heavy responsibilities. I also wish to commend his predecessor for the excellent contribution he made to ensuring the success of the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. Indeed, it was a remarkable session, which laid the foundation for the major task that lies ahead.

This session is being held at a historic time, when we have embarked upon a major undertaking to shape the future we want for present and future generations. If we do what we must, it could be remembered in history as a session that helped us turn the corner in ensuring effective custodianship of the environment, economic justice and social responsibility. What we agreed over two years ago in Rio must be what galvanizes our common effort. We said then that poverty eradication is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development.

Last month, we marked 500 days until the target date for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which we have agreed to achieve by the end of 2015. In Africa, robust economic growth has been registered over the past decade, and the stereotypical narrative about the continent is slowly changing. Africa is now the rising continent, offering tremendous opportunities for trade and investment. Notable progress has also been made towards achieving the MDGs, including in my own country, Ethiopia. There are nonetheless many remaining challenges, such as with respect to reducing the maternal death rate.

It is therefore necessary, as we move forward in the negotiations to formulate the post-2015 development agenda, not to overlook the fact that the MDGs are still unfinished business. The post-2015 development agenda will be complete when it rests on a satisfactory outcome in terms of the implementation of the MDGs. Accordingly, the remaining months should be used to accelerate their implementation. Moreover, the post-2015 development agenda will need to make provision for concluding any aspects of the MDGs that might have to be carried beyond 2015.

What we have done thus far in connection with laying the groundwork for the post-2015 development agenda, both at the intergovernmental level and that of the Secretariat, has been encouraging. The Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals has successfully completed its work, and the two co-chairs must be commended for the contribution they have made. It would be proper, as the Assembly decided at its sixty-eighth session, to use the Open Working Group's proposals as a basis for integrating sustainable development goals into the post-2015 development agenda.

I would also like to express appreciation to the Secretary-General for the efforts he has made in that regard, in conformity with the request contained in the outcome document (resolution 65/1) of the 2010 MDG Summit. The work of the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda has been significant. We are particularly appreciative of the invaluable contribution made by the United Nations System Task Team on the Post-2015 United Nations Development Agenda. We look forward to the synthesis report by the Secretary-General, which we trust will help facilitate effective conversation among Member States and productive intergovernmental negotiations with a view to formulating a post-2015 development agenda that reflects the interests of present and future generations by next year.

We have no doubt that a post-2015 development agenda that responds to the major challenges the world faces must rest on a readiness to foster cooperation, based on the principle of equitable and common but differentiated responsibilities. It is difficult to imagine that the difficult but indispensable issues surrounding the means of implementation can be resolved unless there is flexibility on the question of common but differentiated responsibilities.

One thing is clear in all this. The world has the capacity and resources to effectively respond to the pressing needs we see, to eradicate poverty and ensure sustainable development for all. That has been affirmed by the advance unedited report of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing. The Committee has not offered us definitive proposals, but rather recommendations designed, as they say, to stimulate discussions. It has nonetheless expressed its hope that progress will be made on development financing at the third International Conference on Financing for Development, which is to take place in Addis Ababa in July 2015. Let me affirm our commitment to doing our best to ensure that that historic and extremely critical conference succeeds. It appears to us to be obvious that the effectiveness of the post-2015 agenda depends, among other things, on the success of the Addis Ababa conference. At any rate, it is with that conviction that we will proceed to discharge our responsibility as the host country.

This is also the time when we are striving to achieve an ambitious target that we have set for ourselves: that is, to reach a globally binding climate agreement by 2015 that will limit the rise in the global temperature to below 2 ° Celsius. Let me once again express my appreciation to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon for convening the Climate Summit two days ago. I hope the outcome of the Summit will help us to make progress in achieving this fundamental objective by catalysing action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthening climate resilience.

Needless to say, we in Africa are already facing the brunt of climate change, and this is undermining our efforts to meet our development aspirations, including the Millennium Development Goals. For us, adaptation and mitigation remain a priority, and we need urgent international support for our efforts in that regard. Although we have contributed virtually nothing to global warming, we are indeed playing a leading role in terms of mitigation by scaling up our efforts in renewable energy and promoting energy efficiency. It is only fair and proper that that be adequately recognized and supported.

There can be no doubt that the challenge posed by climate change requires leadership and political commitment at all levels. We have no choice but to rise to that challenge by taking concrete actions to help reduce emissions and demonstrating the necessary political will to achieve a globally binding climate agreement by 2015 in Paris. Failure is not an option.

What we see here at the United Nations is a readiness on the part of States to think big and focus on what unites us. That is what underlies the complex negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda. In sharp contrast to that, what we are witnessing today is a general deterioration of the global security situation. The world is passing through a turbulent period, and that is not an exaggeration. The proliferation and intensity of conflicts have significantly increased.

In our part of the world, progress made over the past decade is being undermined by new cycles of violence and conflict. The crisis in South Sudan is an example. We in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) region are doing everything we can to resolve the South Sudanese crisis through peaceful means with the support of the United Nations, the African Union and international partners. But progress, let alone a breakthrough, has not been easy to come by. The situation highlights an often encountered challenge. Progress in peacemaking can hardly be contemplated when there is a lack of sufficient commitment to a peaceful resolution of a crisis by the parties to the conflict. But IGAD is determined to expend every possible effort to find a lasting solution to the crisis through an all-inclusive political dialogue.

In contrast with the situation in South Sudan and with situations in many parts of the world, the situation in Somalia has been improving over the course of the year. Al-Shabaab may not have been entirely removed as a threat, but it has been greatly degraded. The recent setback it suffered is bound to speed up its demise. The military gains made on the ground cannot, however, be sustained without progress on the political track through the establishment of local administrations and the maintenance of law and order in the newly liberated areas. In that regard, we welcome the establishment of interim local administrations in central and south-west Somalia in line with the provisional Federal Constitution. We need to continue to support Somalia in its efforts to rebuild itself and make a successful transition by 2016.

Conflict is not an exclusively African phenomenon. What has become obvious lately is how much the global security situation is becoming a source of concern. Never since the end of the cold war has the global security situation been as fragile as it is today. The threat of terrorism has affected ever greater and wider areas of the world. At no time over the past many decades has the need for effective cooperation at the international and regional levels been as pressing and as urgent as it is today. That the issue of foreign fighters has become a source of major concern to many is obvious. What is required to make progress in addressing the challenge is a readiness to forge cooperation that brooks no double standards. We need to be resolute in our determination to work together.

All that means that at no time in recent memory has multilateralism been as immensely crucial for the future of the world as it is today. The fact that nations are driven by the pursuit of national interests has always been self-evident. But at this juncture in world history and in the light of the many common challenges that we all face, we have no more realistic option than a commitment to enlightened national interest, which can be promoted only within the framework of multilateralism.

That, in our view, is the sentiment that we should all share at the beginning of the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. We cannot be oblivious to the nexus between our sustainable development agenda and the global situation of peace and security. "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda", the theme of this session, requires a peaceful and stable global environment. It is also in that context that the threat of the spread of the Ebola virus should be viewed. It is both a humanitarian and a security challenge. Containing the spread of the deadly virus should be a matter of utmost priority.

Let me reiterate that it is critical that we collectively address the myriad of peace and security challenges facing our world in order to facilitate progress in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals in the remaining period and to lay a solid foundation for the realization of our transformative agenda in the post-2015 era, as well as to achieve a meaningful climate agreement.

I wish to conclude by stressing Ethiopia's commitment to multilateralism, to joining hands with all like-minded countries in order to contribute to regional and international peace and security and to the successful realization of the major projects that we will undertake in connection with the post-2015 agenda. As a founding member of the Organization and as a member of the League of Nations — although Ethiopia was abandoned by the League — Ethiopia attaches the highest priority to cooperation among peoples and countries with a view to addressing common challenges. It is our conviction that might does not make right. There is no substitute for the pursuit of mutual advantages as a guideline for a realistic and just foreign policy. That is our guide for all the friendships and partnerships we have and will continue to develop.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Matteo Renzi, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy.

Mr. Matteo Renzi, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Matteo Renzi, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Renzi (Italy) (*spoke in Italian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): I would like to greet the General Assembly and to confess how deeply moved I feel to be here. For those who have never spoken in the Assembly Hall, it remains a place of extraordinary fascination and appeal. For those who have become accustomed to being in such halls, they may consider it as something already seen and experienced. For someone like me, who is in the Hall for the first time today, the emotion is overwhelming to find oneself in the place where there is a sense of still being able to build a horizon of human rights, respect, freedom and peace. I feel the emotion of the future in a place where a great Secretary-General, Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld, had the strength, the vision and the intuition to design a different world. For those, like us, who grew up with that model, the statement "For all that has been — thanks. For all that shall be — yes", which Dag Hammarskjöld wrote in his diary, the United Nations was something more than a political programme, it was the very idea of a definition of politics.

Yet today, the future appears threatening. The future is frightening. The future is no longer promising. We want to believe that it is possible to return to the idea of tomorrow. It is the dream of the United Nations to return to the goal of preserving future generations from the horrors of war. Today, however, we must have the courage also to say, when looking back at the history of the Organization, that the errors of the past cannot be erased. The year 2015 is the year in which we will recall the twentieth anniversary of what happened in Srebrenica, when international institutions remained silent before one of the worst massacres and genocides that still today finds no justification. That is why we need to repeat in this Hall today that it is time for politics to return to finding a definition of a future of hope.

My generation grew up hearing that history had ended, that the century that had just passed was a short century in which we had already seen everything. But history has not ended, the century we have left behind us was not short, and today, we must say that the political way is the only way to prevent the bloodletting that is causing so much grief in the Mediterranean, in the Middle East, in Ukraine and in many regions of Africa.

Because of its central location, Italy has the will and the need to play a greater role in the Mediterranean. Italy, whose gift to the world is the image of the city and the public square — in the sense of an open gathering place for the community — cannot be silent when confronted with the transformation of the Mediterranean, which should be the heart of Europe and the public square for discussion and confrontation, but has all too often been transformed into a cemetery.

I take the floor today one year after the Italian Government launched an important operation called Mare Nostrum. Thanks to that operation, I can stand before the Assembly and say that the men and women of the Italian Coast Guard and volunteer services have saved 80,000 human lives, 80,000 people who could become doctors, musicians, workers, 80,000 people who were pulled from the Mediterranean as if from a cemetery, thanks to an operation that we take pride in but that cannot be left only to Italy today. We need to say forcefully that intervention in the Mediterranean area is a strategic intervention for the international community that cannot only be left to a single force.

In saying that, we need to add that the priority for that area today is Libya and our friends, the Libyan people, who are suffering through a time of transition that seems never to end. We are committed not to underestimate a hot spot in the midst of the Mediterranean that could reach a point of no return in a spiral of violence and instability in the region. Italy will continue to do its part, but we must emphasize with decisiveness and intensity in this prestigious forum that the risk of a gradual fragmentation of Libya and the negative consequences that that would trigger for the entire North African region would be catastrophic for peace and stability in the entire region. We are committed to supporting a strong and stable Libya, and we will continue to work with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya through our embassy, which is still open, but we want to say with great determination that the situation in Libya must be a priority for all.

Another priority, especially for those today who are preparing for a discussion on the terrorist threat in the Middle East and elsewhere, is to be aware that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), as was said yesterday with great force, is not just a terrorist threat to a specific region, but a risk for the entire community of men and women who would call themselves human. We are not dealing with a form of religious expression. Religions can both fuel the fires of a conflict and provide water to heal wounds. We believe that ISIL and the threat it represents are not connected in the slightest way with a conflict of religions.

At the same time, we say forcefully that those of us who had the duty — or the good fortune, if I may speak provocatively — to visit a refugee camp, as I did in the second half of August in Erbil, Kurdistan, in Iraq, will realize that we cannot be unresponsive to the dismayed faces of so many victims of fanaticism. To see an international aid worker who shows you images on her cellphone of children who were executed, who were lined up against a wall and shot; to hear stories about young women taken to barracks in the centre of Mosul and forced, in silence and powerlessness, to satisfy all the desires of violent terrorists; to think of what is happening to journalists and hostages — requires us to say what must be said. A genocide is under way, and in the face of such activities, we know that only a unified international community can win this battle of civilization against evil. That is why I said yesterday to President Obama that the international coalition can count on Italy's support to eliminate the threat posed by ISIL, and I continue to insist on the fact that the commitment of our country in every region and in every area of the region will be resolute and, I hope, decisive.

Italy has contributed and will continue to contribute in Lebanon, through our soldiers and their commitment to supporting the United Nations peacekeeping mission deployed in the south of Lebanon. I would take this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to those women and men who, from Lebanon to Afghanistan, wear the uniform of our country to make a concrete commitment to ensuring stability and peace. But at the same time, I know, we know, that there will be no peace in the region until what a great prophet of Italian political thought, Giorgio La Pira, called the "peace of the children of Abraham" has brought an end to the unresolved conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians.

We will never tire of seeking peace for Jerusalem, and a ceasefire in Gaza will be consolidated and respected only if we all recognize the two-State solution and the right of the Palestinian people to finally have a homeland. As I have said before and I repeat here, it is not only a right but a duty for Israel to exist — for the sake of history, memory, innovation, democracy, freedom, of which the Israeli people give constant proof. The entire international community must support that process. Those words must be clearly heard in this Hall, where someone once dared to call into question the very right of Israel to exist.

It is dialogue and politics that can prevent a return to the dialectics of the cold war. We had thought that those times were behind us, but now the tensions on the eastern borders of Ukraine risk are jeopardizing the greatest achievement of the European integration process — a continent of peace and stability. Never before had there been such a long period of peace as the one we are experiencing today in Europe.

But the crisis in Ukraine has forced us to confront unexpected challenges. I believe that there is a connection between two fundamental principles — the right of the Ukrainian people to have the territorial unity of their country recognized in the face of acts of aggression that have violated its integrity, and at the same time, I hope that we can overcome the tensions with the Russian Federation, which will, I hope, return to playing its role as a global stakeholder so needed by the international community.

A great expert in politics from the Italian Renaissance, Niccolò Macchiavelli, wrote, "To know how to recognize an opportunity in war and take is of greater benefit than anything else". Macchiavelli's words helps us understand in this moment that the Minsk Agreement is a great opportunity in the war under way in Ukraine. We must seize this opportunity for the people of Ukraine and the international community.

Dialogue and reconciliation are indispensable tools in the Sudan, Somalia and in the Central African region. They are the strong point of our community as it faces newly emerging difficulties, starting with the Ebola virus and its dramatic humanitarian, social and economic consequences. Italy is doing its part and will continue to do so, following the Secretary-General's leadership and inspiration, whom I thank for his prompt action.

But I should also emphasize that political solutions are the only way forward for the year 2015, although they are often marked by complex, difficult challenges. Problems to be solved include the challenge of achieving new global governance of the Internet, as the President of Brazil mentioned yesterday (see A/69/PV.6), and the challenge of finally making a major investment in gender equality, so that we no longer consider it newsworthy when a woman takes on a position of responsibility. I am very proud to say that for the first time in its history, women make up more than half of my Government. I am happy and pleased to say that we will never fall short in our commitment to leadership roles for women, but above all we will fight to ensure that young women can be free in developing countries and nations facing especially difficult situations.

I cannot emphasize strongly enough that 2015 will be a very important year in the fight against religious discrimination. Every religious minority has the right to be defended. Never before have so many Christians been killed in regions around the world because of their faith, and never before has one of the genuine tragedies of our times been so badly underestimated. Within the international community it is especially vital that we forcefully affirm the values of equality, respect and tolerance, which are of special relevance for us in Italy when talking about the death penalty. That is why this new session of the General Assembly coincides with the presentation of a new draft resolution on abolishing capital punishment. I hope that the number of countries supporting it will continue to grow.

I would like to say that I am especially excited to be able to speak about that on behalf of Italy, which has always fought at both the governmental and the non-governmental levels to make that issue a priority. Earlier in my career, I was mayor of the city of Florence, which was the first place in history to abolish the death penalty. A herald descended the steps of the Palazzo Vecchio to announce that in that State, the Grand Duchy, the death penalty had been abolished. Let us not pile more barbarous acts on other ones. I ask every State to join us in this battle for civilization.

The year 2015 will also be an important one for the Expo in Milan and the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris, which we discussed two days ago, and for actions that remind us of the need for a turning point, such as in the debate over Security Council reform. We all believe that the Council must be made more effective, representative, transparent and accountable to the members of the international community. But opinions on how to achieve that goal still differ. In order to bring the various reform models closer together, the Uniting for Consensus group, to which my country belongs, continues to maintain that creating new permanent members would imperil that goal, and I reiterate our willingness to find compromise solutions.

I believe that it is crucial that all those challenges be seen as subsumed within the greatest challenge of them all, one in which we must all be on the front lines. There can be no peace, no freedom, no respect until the international community puts at the centre of its strategy a gigantic, grand investment into education, schools, universities, going from house to house, village to village, piazza to piazza. We say that the most powerful weapon in affirming the values of peace and freedom is the weapon of education, of culture, of human capital, of investment in people and in the stories and freedoms of individual women and men.

That is why I believe that, while we are living in difficult times, we are also living in a time when we must, as former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld put it, say yes to the future. He also said, "We are not permitted to choose the frame of our destiny. But what we put into it is ours". We are not permitted to choose the frame of our destiny. We are living in a time of threats and problems. Yet what we can put into it is entirely ours. Within this frame of our destiny we can once again inspire others with the values of education, freedom and peace, so long as we are stay true to our history and hopeful for our future.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Matteo Renzi, President of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Italy, was escorted from the rostrum.

Statement by Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by the President of the European Council.

Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, and inviting him to make a statement.

Mr. Van Rompuy (European Council) (*spoke in French*): The world today is much more dangerous than when we were together here last year. Fear is stronger than hope, I'm afraid. Tragic events have marked us. More than 200 schoolgirls were abducted and enslaved. An airliner packed with parents, children, scientists, tourists and crew members was cut down in mid-flight. A mountain people were hunted, trapped and slaughtered. And last week, at sea, 500 people were shipwrecked, the victims of murderous smugglers.

Those dark episodes disturb us in that they seem to herald deeper changes. Public opinion is beginning to fear that the world is slipping through our fingers and turning to evil. It is as if the political foundation of our very existence together is being challenged, as if the way individuals and States relate to one another is threatened. Our citizens see the rise of obscurantism and the forces of fanaticism; they see the boundaries of a world of yesterday — of the day before yesterday, of an insane world — reappearing. Yes, as my countryman Paul-Henri Spaak said 66 years ago before this same Assembly, we are afraid. Ours is not the fear of a coward, but the fear that a man can and should have when he looks to the future and considers all that it may hold of horror and tragedy, and the terrible responsibilities in that future (see A/PV.147, p. 280).

(*spoke in English*)

When the values we share are under pressure, when the order of things seems to be unravelling, we must act. We must bring back our girls and free them from Boko Haram. We must allow the families of the victims of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17 to pay their last respects to their loved ones, and keep alive the memory of the hopeful people drowned in the Mediterranean. All of us must also mobilize against the barbaric group that is the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Together, we can make the world a safer place again.

When looking back upon the past year, the most bewildering act in our region, for us in Europe, was the abrupt and illegal annexation of Crimea in March. That violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity triggered the gravest threat to the European security order in decades. It matters beyond the European continent. It is about rejecting the use of force and about defending the rule of law that upholds our society of nations. The General Assembly assumed its responsibility by adopting resolution 68/262 on the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Members defended those very values that the Charter of the United Nations was built upon. The European Union welcomes the strong message that the breaking of rules will not be tolerated. When you tamper with borders, you tamper with peace.

The European Union stands firm in its solidarity with Ukraine. It is the Ukrainian people's right to decide their own political destiny. Europe responded to aggression and the violation of international law with a wide range of political, economic and financial sanctions. We knew that that could hurt our own economies in return, but together with our international partners, we did not relent, since the stability of the European house itself was at stake. Now all of us must ensure that the peace process launched in Minsk advances, and that all parties respect the ceasefire and abide by the peace plan. The sanctions are not a goal in themselves, and they can be revised, provided that there is tangible progress. We can rebuild trust if commitments are met.

At the same time, it is essential that Ukraine's authorities move firmly forward on the path of reforms. Those reforms — economic, political and constitutional — will determine the success of a lasting political solution. The country's political life and prosperity shall belong to all its citizens. An inclusive Ukraine with a new social contract and a fair balance between the parts and the whole is the best way to secure the country's future.

European Union countries and institutions are fully committed to supporting Ukraine as it follows that path. The European Union Association Agreement with the Ukraine, which was ratified just last week by the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada and the European Parliament, is a compass and an opportunity to help Ukraine transform into the dynamic, modern and open democracy its people deserve. The steps ahead in this cooperation will take place within the wider picture of the peace process. With Russia, our biggest neighbour, we are ready to engage and re-establish a basis of trust and of promises kept.

There are nearly 200 countries in this world, but many thousands of minorities. Clearly, there is no other way than ensuring inclusiveness, respecting identities and giving people a voice. As a Belgian and a European, I know it can be a real effort to stay together. It requires constant attention, openness, empathy and willingness to adjust. Countries do not have to break up to allow for multiple, often multi-layered, identities to coexist. Unity in diversity can work.

The most pressing concern on all our minds today is Iraq, Syria and the wider Middle East. I need not sketch the bleak outlook, sinister deeds or unspeakable suffering in the region. What we have seen this past summer has nothing to do with Islam. It is the return of barbaric ghosts from a long-forgotten past and horrendous deeds rejecting that we are one humankind and denying the very basic values of civilization.

As the Grand Mufti of Egypt said to me two weeks ago, ISIL is abusing the name of Islam and the very values of Islam and of every religion. I welcome the statements made and measures taken by the League of Arab States, the Organization for Islamic Cooperation and Muslim nations against ISIL. It is essential that the parties and neighbours most concerned be at the frontlines of this common fight, but all of us must do our share to confront and isolate ISIL, block financial flows and weapon flows, cut off illegal oil revenue and stop the influx of foreign fighters. European Union Governments are working hard on all those fronts.

As we know from our own national experience, radicalization can strike anywhere: take the young jihadi fanatic from France who turned torturer in Syria and, back in Europe, murdered four innocent victims in the Jewish Museum of Belgium, in my hometown of Brussels. We need urgent collective action to stop those foreign fighters from joining ISIL's ranks, as so many of us underlined in yesterday's high-level Security Council meeting (see S/PV.7272). We also must work together to help the affected countries. Iraq's new Government, which is aiming for inclusive leadership, deserves everybody's full support and certainly has ours.

However, the crisis cannot be resolved without a political solution for Syria. We owe it to the almost 200,000 victims and the millions who have had to flee their homes. It is quite simply a catastrophe and one of the international community's biggest failures. What is needed is a comprehensive regional solution. It must include, as this summer's tragic events in Gaza underlined once more, a two-State solution with an independent, democratic, viable Palestinian State living side by side and in peace with Israel and its other neighbours.

The violent dynamics are spreading instability in all directions — into the Sahel region and as far south as Nigeria, but also to the east. Those dynamics are fostering terrorism, organized crime, arms flows, drugs trafficking, human smuggling and radicalization, as we also see in Libya. I want to pay tribute to France for its efforts to help, upon their requests, the Governments of Mali and the Central African Republic to restore the rule of law and instil inclusiveness and reconciliation in close collaboration with the African Union, the United Nations and the whole of the European Union. We are ready to undertake our responsibility, knowing that we Europeans have no self-interested geostrategic objectives in the area. We turned that page of history decades ago.

A collective approach is important to deal with another tragic symptom of an imploding Middle East: dramatic migration in the Mediterranean. We have seen millions of people fleeing the war in Syria into countries such as Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey. European lifeguards rescue up to 1,000 people a week — people who risk their lives on small boats across the Mediterranean, looking for a life free from fear. Many come from countries where the State structures have crumbled, where violence is endemic and where people's most basic needs cannot be met.

(*spoke in French*)

The only lasting answer to despair is development. I wish to pay tribute to the tireless commitment of the United Nations and of the Secretary-General to promoting the development goals, including the post-2015 development agenda, and to maintaining a level of ambition for our actions that is commensurate with the challenges. I also acknowledge their efforts with regard to climate challenge, where Europe remains committed at the forefront and will demonstrate that commitment at the Paris negotiations next year. I hope that all nations — large and small, rich and poor — will assume their responsibility.

The Ebola crisis cruelly reminds us that just as the future of a country depends on its health facilities, the health of all may ultimately depend on such structures. Ebola is the modern plague. The teams of doctors, nurses and volunteers must be strengthened. Europe stands ready, with others, to help, to relieve and to heal.

This autumn, we commemorate the centenary of a great conflict that was the first to lead the entire world into its destructive spiral. It took the Second World War for our nations to pull themselves together and to try and build peace together, making the birth of our union of nations possible. Although, since then, we have managed to prevent another world war, we have still not put an end to violence between or within States. We meet today not to lament the unforgivable but to nurture hope and to achieve what we must do, that is, to act together.

(*spoke in English*)

We must overcome fear. We must overcome fear by fighting danger, by restoring justice and by striving for peace so that next year, when our society of nations meets again in New York, we can say, "The spell of that dreadful summer of 2014 has been broken. Step by step, we are making progress. Patiently but relentlessly, we are restoring a place for hope."

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the European Council for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Herman Van Rompuy, President of the European Council, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda.

Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Browne (Antigua and Barbuda): At the outset, I wish to extend heartiest congratulations to the President on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. Antigua and Barbuda looks forward to his leadership and guidance throughout this session. I also offer congratulations to his predecessor, His Excellency Ambassador John Ashe, on a job well done and on his unrelenting service to the United Nations community, particularly small island developing States.

I stand before the Assembly as, perhaps, the newest Head of Government at this sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly. The political party that I have the honour to lead was democratically and overwhelmingly elected as the Government of Antigua and Barbuda a little more than three months ago. I am probably also among the youngest of the Heads of Government at this gathering. However, although I may be relatively young and my Government new, I have been a steadfast believer in the value of the United Nations from the first moment of my adult consciousness. The idea that there could be a world without a machinery for leaders to gather in one place, with the single purpose of improving the lives of all humankind, conjures up images of chaos, carnage and catastrophe too frightening to contemplate. While some may argue that the United Nations has not always lived up to its noble purposes and that chaos, carnage and catastrophe have scarred our planet, I am profoundly aware that, without the United Nations, the viciousness and the wounds would have been significantly worse.

However, even as I rejoice in the existence of the United Nations, I also lament that its largest and most powerful nations have too often used their privileged positions to weaken the authority of the Organization in advancement of their own narrow interests. It has also been a grave sadness that in the past powerful States have circumvented this body in pursuit of their national goals, even in defiance of the solidarity of the larger family of nations.

For those reasons, my Government and the people of Antigua and Barbuda strongly support the reform of the Organization. We would like to see reform that democratizes the United Nations so as to give a greater voice to those countries, such as mine, that are marginalized in decision-making because we are considered too small to make a difference. We would also welcome a comprehensive reform of the Security Council that ends the anachronism of the veto power of the five permanent members — a system that has no legitimacy in fairness and in the global balance and that has often prevented the Security Council from acting in a manner that would command worldwide support and acclamation.

It is paradoxical that such nations, particularly those that most fiercely advocate respect for democracy and the rule of law, implement those principles at home but decline to implement them abroad. Respect for the rule of law and for the democratic principle that gives nations rights that are as inalienable as those of the individual in powerful States must become integral to the process and systems of governance by which the world's affairs are managed. Indeed, small States, such as mine, rely on the strength of the United Nations and on international respect for democracy and the rule of law to protect us from incursions on our sovereignty and disregard for our rights. Centuries ago, the philosopher Aristotle spoke a compelling truth when he said of the State:

> "A State is not a mere society, having a common place, established for the prevention of mutual crime and for the sake of exchange ... Political society exists for the sake of noble actions, and not of mere companionship."

Aristotle's observation concerning the State remains valid and legitimate in today's international system of States, which the United Nations represents. Every State within the international system must recognize that noble action is one of the purposes of a political community.

In this regard, I draw the Assembly's attention to the fact that 10 long years have passed since my small country, with a population of under 100,000 and an economy of $1.1 billion, received a favourable decision by the Dispute Settlement Body of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in a complaint against the United States, a nation of several hundred million inhabitants whose economy is valued in the trillions. Despite the favourable judgment, against which the losing party has appealed without success, the United States Government has not seen fit to perform the "noble action" of settling with my small State in a manner consistent with the harm done to our economy. My country has been denied income that, had we continued to earn it, would have contributed significantly to the welfare of my people, and to the capacity of our economy to cope with the grave effects of climate change and the financial crisis to which we became a casualty. I stress that when my country took the United States before the WTO's Dispute Settlement Body, we did not do so as an act of hostility to a neighbour with whom we have enjoyed a long and friendly relationship; we did so because we had a duty to care for our people.

My small State was the victim of a trade violation. In good faith, we sought relief within the international system and the democratic principles and rule of law that it is meant to uphold. To be fair, the system delivered justice. But in so doing, its weakness was exposed when justice could not be enforced because the powerful party that was found against would not settle with the small country that was injured. However, if democracy and the rule of law are to prevail in our international system, they have to be upheld and respected by the powerful and cannot simply be imposed upon the weak. Otherwise, there will be resentment, discontent and possibly conflict.

Yesterday, speaking in this very forum, the President of the United States, Barack Obama, said that "right makes might... bigger nations should not be able to bully smaller ones" (*A/69/PV.6, p. 11*). If this universal truth is a guiding principle of his Government, then the United States cannot continue to approbate and reprobate on this principle. The noble thing is for the United States to settle this long-outstanding judgement fairly and expeditiously. In another context, but voicing a similar principle, President Obama said the following a year ago:

> "[T]he principle of sovereignty is at the centre of our international order. But sovereignty cannot be ... an excuse for the international community to turn a blind eye" (*A/68/PV.5, p. 16*).

President Obama was perfectly right. That is why I believe he will agree that sovereignty and power should not be a shield against the fulfilment of obligations independently assessed, or an excuse for not settling this very vexing issue.

I am sure that President Obama would also agree that the international community cannot turn a blind eye to the blockade imposed on Cuba. Antigua and Barbuda supports the preservation of the sovereignty of every nation. We are very proud of our long-standing relationship with the Republic of Cuba. We therefore join with the international community and condemn any discriminatory and retaliatory policies and practices that serve to prevent Cuba from exercising its right to freely participate in the affairs of the hemisphere. My Government firmly believes that any application of unilateral and extraterritorial coercive laws and measures that conflict with international law and the principles of free navigation and international trade is wrong. We therefore urge our long-standing friend, the United States, to respect and take note of the numerous calls by the United Nations to immediately bring an end to the unjust economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on our neighbour Cuba.

My small country has no military might, no economic clout. All that we have is membership of the international system as our shield and our voice in this body as our sword. That is why we will continue to uphold the value of the United Nations vigorously, and why we will join the effort for its reform to make it the guardian of all nations and all peoples.

I want to express my Government's full agreement with the President's decision to make the theme of this General Assembly debate, "Delivering on and implementing a transformative post-2015 development agenda." It is well known now that the Millennium Development Goals Gap Task Force has reported mixed progress in the achievement of key targets. Among the targets on which there has been insufficient acceleration has been official development assistance. I congratulate those countries that have reached the pledged target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income. However, the developed world is still not meeting the target of $315 billion. Indeed, it is not even reaching half that amount.

My own country and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) region as a whole have witnessed a decline in bilateral assistance from larger and richer nations within our own hemisphere, and we have relied on non-traditional sources, such as the People's Republic of China and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. In regard to energy, the high cost of which cripples our country, the Venezuelan Petrocaribe arrangement has been a lifebelt in a sea of turbulence. We are also grateful for the contributions of our other international partners, including the European Union. However, as we go forward, there is clearly a need for increased global engagement with respect to development assistance, including the presence at the table of recipients as well as donors.

In addition — and as a most urgent matter — the international financial institutions must be urged to stop penalizing small Caribbean States on the basis of their flawed per capita income criterion. Our countries are denied access to concessional financing because we are classified as middle-income countries. This obdurate attitude of the international financial institutions in not devising better criteria for assessing the eligibility of our small economies for concessionary financing, forces us into the commercial lending market. The consequence of this is that our debt is rising and many of us are among the most highly indebted countries in the world on a per capita basis.

But I ask, "What is the alternative?" Rhetorically, I ask again, "What is the alternative?" It is said that six years after the global economy collapsed, jobs are being created, global financial systems have stabilized and people are once again being lifted out of poverty. But I say here this afternoon that this is not a universal truth. In the case of small States in the Caribbean, the global economic crisis in 2008 in whose creation we played no part, sent our economies into a tailspin. We have yet to recover fully from its impact, and we will probably never recover the development ground that we lost. Incredibly, a significant number of our educated young people are unemployed. If we fail to satisfy their aspirations, we condemn them to a life on the margins of society at best, or a life of crime and violence at worst. No nation can opt for so devastating an alternative.

There is now an urgent need for this United Nations body, through one of its appropriate organs, to address the large debt that CARICOM countries have accumulated owing to declining aid, poor terms of trade, the high cost of regulating financial services, and expenditure on curbing drug trafficking and stopping refugees.

Those countries in the Caribbean, including my own, that are now increasing their debt are not doing so because of poor policies or because we are not focused on increased productivity and growth, nor are we doing so because of high expenditures on vanity projects or unsustainable ventures. We are doing so to build the socioeconomic infrastructure to facilitate revenue generation.

The fact of the matter is that the global crisis that began in 2008 has set our economies back to pre-1974 levels. While we are tightening our belts, forging relations with the private sector and energetically seeking foreign direct investment in productive enterprises, we are scraping our way uphill, having been pushed downwards by a deluge of external factors.

The United Nations cannot step back from those realities, and it would be wrong, as it has been wrong for some time, for this Organization to abdicate its responsibility for action to multilateral organizations whose membership is made up only of a few, however powerful they may be. Indeed, it is precisely because the members of those groups are powerful and because they reach into a network of economic and political decision-making bodies that can easily impose their will on the weak and vulnerable that the United Nations should not abandon its responsibilities to the weak, who depend on this Organization.

I cannot leave this rostrum without addressing the war on terror and the issue of the dreaded Ebola disease. The threat of Ebola requires a global response, and we urge the international community to act collectively and swiftly in combatting what could become a global pandemic with grave socio-economic consequences for small States, especially our fragile, tourism-dependent countries in the Caribbean. Antigua and Barbuda commends the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for its pledge of $5 million towards Ebola eradication and the Republic of Cuba for sending 165 doctors. We call on the members of the international community to continue to contribute towards that effort.

Antigua and Barbuda condemns the savage and cruel acts of the jihadists of the Islamic State, who have beheaded three civilians. On behalf of the Government and people of Antigua and Barbuda, I express our deepest sympathy to the families of the victims and to the people of the United States, France and the United Kingdom for those atrocities. There can be no justification for such barbaric behaviour. We cannot afford a world that slips back into the dark ages when violence, wars and barbarism were the stock-and-trade of religious intolerance and ethnic divisions.

Yet, as we survey the global scene, there are deeply troubling instances of such behaviour in Europe, Africa and the Middle East. In all this, the role of the United Nations becomes critically important. What is required is not unilateral acts that will embroil specific nations in cycles of violent retaliation. What is required is a United Nations whose Member States, particularly those on the Security Council, act together to defend peace and security.

After only 100 days in office, my Government has demonstrated its commitment to building an all-inclusive, all-empowering and egalitarian society by promoting the protection of women's rights, gender equality and the rights of the disabled. We see those issues not only as human rights issues, but as essential components of sustainable development, peace, social justice and security. At our first session of Parliament, my Government ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We have gone further and have appointed a distinguished son of the soil, who is visually challenged, to serve as our representative to the United Nations. We have also appointed a plethora of women to serve in the Upper House of Parliament as ambassadors and in other key positions within the public sector. It is my Government's pledge to continue to work towards full gender equality and the advancement and empowerment of women.

When the President of the General Assembly opened the Assembly's sixty-ninth session, he remarked that "to say that we are living in tumultuous times would seem an understatement" (*A/69/PV.1, p. 3*). He noted that the entire world is facing challenges such as poverty, hunger, climate change and rising sea levels, persistent unemployment, armed conflicts and the Ebola virus epidemic. He called on this global body to tackle those challenges "with dedication, single-mindedness of purpose and compromise" and "a sense of resolve and resilience" (*ibid.*) He was right to do so.

Crises are staring human civilization in the face, including climate change, the Ebola virus and the threat posed by the Islamic State. As a result, we all face a future where those challenges can only be dealt with through joint international action. The United Nations, the parliament of parliaments, is the place where such joint action is to be decided and implemented. We need to strengthen the United Nations capacity for such action, whether military or humanitarian. There is no substitute for the United Nations. Antigua and Barbuda pledges its continued support of and participation in the work of the United Nations.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Gaston Alphonso Browne, Prime Minister and Minister for Finance and Corporate Governance of Antigua and Barbuda, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait.

Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Sheikh Al Sabah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, it pleases me to extend, on behalf of the Government and people of the State of Kuwait, our sincere congratulations to the President of the General Assembly and to his friendly country, Uganda, on his election as President of the Assembly at its sixty-ninth session. We are certain that his vast experience in international affairs will enable him to conduct the deliberations of the Assembly at this session wisely and ably, and we wish him success in that endeavour. We also note with praise the successful manner in which his predecessor, His Excellency Mr. John Ashe, conducted the deliberations during his presidency of the previous session.

In that regard, I would also like to pay tribute to the tremendous efforts exerted by His Excellency Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in leading the Organization, in accordance with the visions and ideas derived from the principles and purposes of the Charter, to maintain international peace and security and achieve its goals in a sustainable manner by confronting the kinds of risks and challenges engulfing the world, whether they be chronic or recent.

In its nearly 70 years of existence and service, the United Nations has witnessed increasing challenges, as represented by numerous incidents and crises, and has overcome exceptional political and economic milestones. That has made it a haven and a destination for all the peoples and nations of the world, bestowed upon the Organization a wider scope of action to contain crises and given it a more significant role in reaching solutions and achieving further accomplishments.

However, the deep-rooted and wide-ranging international transformations of the past few years have made the continuation of the Organization, based on its current executive mechanisms and administrative structures, an obstacle to achieving its historic mission. When we speak of change for the better, it is crucial to seek comprehensive reform by proposing scenarios and solutions aimed at reviving the Organization, its organs and its specialized agencies in order to ensure the enhancement and development of their capacity to become more proactive, in line with modern times, and to deepen their understanding of the basic requirements of Member States.

Reform should start with the Security Council, as the organ entrusted with the maintaining international peace and security and the closest to reality; it is also the most effective and is already predisposed to measure its accomplishments according to its mandates. The State of Kuwait, which currently presides over the Arab Summit and coordinates the Arab Group, would like to stress the importance of thoroughly and carefully addressing the structural flaws in the composition of the Council, in particular the issue of expanding the category of permanent membership by ensuring permanent Arab representation in the Council, based on the demographic dimension of the Arab Members, whose population exceeds 350 million and whose number increased from five States in 1945 to 22 at present. That represents nearly 12 per cent of the total number of States Members of the United Nations, in addition to the fact that the issues relating to the Arab States and their region top the agenda of the Council.

Several countries of the Middle East are facing tremendous security, political and humanitarian challenges and an exceptional situation, due to the inability of the Security Council to carry out its functions, which has led to the aggravation and deterioration of the situation in many States of the region. The recent Israeli military aggression against the Gaza Strip lasted for 50 consecutive days, during which the non-stop killing and machine of destruction continuously targeted everything human, mowing down thousands of unarmed civilians, the majority of them elderly, women and children. That action appears to have been emblematic of the series of Israeli violations of the most basic rules of international law and international humanitarian law, and constitutes yet another addition to its bloody history of rejecting all regional and international initiatives to lay the foundations of a just and lasting peace.

In that regard, the State of Kuwait welcomes the ceasefire agreement signed on 26 August, as well as the international and regional initiatives undertaken to end to that crisis and aggression, primarily those promoted by our sister Arab Republic of Egypt. In that context, we renew our call on the Security Council to assume its responsibility to provide international protection to the Palestinian people and territory, pursuant to the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, and to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to halt its unilateral practices aimed at imposing a policy of faits accomplis, such as illegal settlements and the unlawful siege of the Gaza Strip, in addition to attempts to change the demographic nature of Jerusalem by means of Judaization. Israel must be compelled to return to the negotiating table with a view to ending its occupation of all Palestinian and Arab lands, as well to achieve the establishment of a Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with the relevant Security Council resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the road map and the Arab Peace Initiative.

As the crisis in Syria, now entering its fourth year, escalates into a bloodier phase, our concern about the potential regional and international repercussions of the failure of that State has given way to anxiety about the exacerbation of the cycle of violence, which has already claimed the lives of more than 190,000 people, created 3 million refugees and displaced another 6 million people. In that regard, the State of Kuwait welcomes Security Council resolution 2165 (2014) on opening new border crossings to deliver aid to the affected Syrian people. We hope that all concerned will pool their efforts to ensure the swiftest possible delivery of humanitarian assistance to the Syrian people in the besieged areas and throughout Syrian territory and beyond.

In response to the ripple effects of that intensifying humanitarian crisis, the State of Kuwait hosted two international donor conferences, in January 2013 and January 2014, to support the humanitarian situation in Syria. Pledges made at those two conferences totaled $3.8 billion, of which the State of Kuwait contributed $800 million. That sum was delivered in its entirety to specialized United Nations agencies, as well as to other governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with humanitarian affairs. In that regard, we reiterate the importance of continued regional and international efforts to reach a political solution that satisfies the aspirations of the Syrian people for a free and decent life, according to the Geneva communiqué, and that preserve Syria's unity, security and stability.

With respect to the sisterly Republic of Yemen, the State of Kuwait, as the current chair of the Gulf Cooperation Council, has sought within its mandate to establish peace and stability in Yemen, and to fulfil the aspirations of its people for development and prosperity, in accordance with the Gulf States initiative and its executive mechanism. However, tensions due to the continued rivalry between some factions, along with the resulting deterioration in the security and political situations, are a source of concern, because of their potential negative impact on the future of the political process in Yemen. They also pose a threat to the country's unity and territorial integrity. We reiterate our full support for enforcing the outcome of the national dialogue and for addressing the acts of violence and terrorism that some separatist groups continue to provoke.

With respect to the situation in Libya, the State of Kuwait renews its support to the legitimately elected Libyan Government, as an integral complement to the process of democratic transformation that will ensure the security, unity and territorial integrity of Libya. The State of Kuwait also emphasizes the need for the international community and the Security Council to honour their commitments by fully adhering to resolution 2174 (2014), in order to guarantee a better future for Libya and its people.

Within the same region, concerning Iran's nuclear programme, the State of Kuwait supports the ongoing efforts to resolve that issue by peaceful means and in a manner that will guarantee the Islamic Republic of Iran and all the countries of the region the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, under the supervision and monitoring of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). We also emphasize the importance of reaching international agreement on Iran's nuclear programme, based on full Iranian commitment to cooperating with the IAEA, implementing all relevant Security Council resolutions and enforcing the highest standards of safety and security in its nuclear facilities.

The State of Kuwait reiterates its principled and firm rejection of all forms of terrorism and extremism, whatever their reasons, motives or sources. It also believes that promoting the culture of tolerance and coexistence among peoples and nations should be a priority in its internal and external policies, which are derived from the tolerant teachings of Islamic Sharia. The State of Kuwait emphasizes its full support for all international efforts to combat and put an end to the terrorist threats facing the world, which aim to undermine the elements of international peace and security. Kuwait welcomes resolution 2178 (2014) adopted yesterday by the Security Council, reinforcing international efforts to combat terrorism and foreign fighters.

In that regard, we denounce the actions of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), as well as its terroristic practices and acts of aggression in parts of Iraqi and Syrian territory. We equally condemn ISIL's grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. We reiterate our commitment to support the efforts and endeavours of the Iraqi Government to overcome the destructive scourge of terrorism that currently threatens its security, stability and territorial integrity and that is adversely and clearly affecting the political process in that country.

The giant leap represented by new communications technologies, thanks to which the United Nations has been able to expand the reach of its lofty message, has also increased the complexity of monitoring and assessing the fast-paced global environment, as well as handling its output and consequences. The aggregate expertise and experience represented in our Organization at the professional, technical and political levels is embodied in the United Nations Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2). The Declaration's clearly identified priorities and simple terms have played a major and significant role in improving the lives of millions of people in many regions of the world. The Declaration has also set an example by demonstrating the importance of partnership in international work, through cooperation and coordination among Governments, and the promotion of the role of civil society organizations and the private sector.

By drawing on modern technology and scientific advances, the Millennium Development Goals have provided the peoples and nations of the world with renewed hope for creating a better world, and have created an incentive to achieve them. The Organization has encouraged Member States to devise a comprehensive and ambitious post-2015 development plan with sustainable development in all three dimensions — economic, social and environmental — at its core. That plan will address new dangers and challenges and anticipate future conditions, which will be different from those we face today.

In that regard, the State of Kuwait welcomes the Climate Summit that the Secretary-General convened two days ago, and reiterates that climate change has negative repercussions on development throughout the world and in the Arab region in particular. There is a clear need for international action and solidarity within the framework of the sustainable development goals, according to the principle of shared but differentiated responsibility, in order to guarantee that all States benefit equally from the new agenda. In that regard, special attention and treatment should be provided to the developing countries, which are the States most adversely affected by climate change.

Since winning its independence and joining the global Organization, the State of Kuwait has never been far removed from the crises and challenges facing the world. Our founding fathers defined a purely humanitarian approach to helping the needy and restoring hope to those who have lost it, bypassing the traditional bases for giving, which were largely rooted in geographic location, ethnic origin or political affiliation. Their sons have followed that approach, giving greater priority to contemporary trends through the pillars that define our foreign policy. That commitment rests on devising and developing methods for providing assistance and aid to the majority of the world's countries by promoting activities that would support the message of the United Nations in creating a world in which security and stability prevail, and people live in peace and prosperity.

The establishment in 1961 of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development was an expression of the sincere desire of the State of Kuwait to support the development efforts of Arab States and friendly countries by providing soft loans and technical assistance. In pursuing that approach, and in order to show its keen interest in supporting the humanitarian role of the United Nations, the State of Kuwait has doubled the amount of its fixed annual voluntary contributions to a number of international agencies and organizations, including its recent donation to the World Health Organization to combat the spread of the Ebola virus in West Africa, giving wider horizons and broader reach to the humanitarian work of the State of Kuwait.

Our wide-ranging diplomatic efforts at the regional and international levels, led by His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Amir of the State of Kuwait, were recognized by the international community with an exceptional and unprecedented international honour when the Secretary-General presented His Highness with a certificate of appreciation in recognition of the outstanding role in humanitarian leadership played by His Highness, the Government and the people of the State of Kuwait in saving the lives of millions of people.

To conclude, I would like to emphasize that the State of Kuwait adheres to the multilateral international system, as well as to the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. Kuwait believes in the critical importance of furthering all efforts to ensure the continuity of our venerable Organization by ensuring that all States fulfil their responsibilities and commitments under international conventions and conferences in order to help find just and lasting solutions to global threats and challenges, and to reach the loftier goal of maintaining international peace and security.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait for the statement just made.

His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Victor-Viorel Ponta, Prime Minister of Romania

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the Prime Minister of Romania.

Mr. Victor-Viorel Ponta, Prime Minister of Romania, was escorted to the rostrum.

The Acting President: I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency Mr. Victor-Viorel Ponta, Prime Minister of Romania, and inviting him to address the General Assembly.

Mr. Ponta (Romania): It is a great honour for me to address the General Assembly today on behalf of the Romanian delegation. At the outset, allow me to congratulate the Honourable Sam Kutesa on his election as President of the General Assembly at its sixty-ninth session and to assure him of the full support of the Romanian delegation in fulfilling his high responsibility and functions.

(*spoke in French*)

As this is the first time I have had the honour to participate in this high-level debate, let me reaffirm my country's peaceful mission as a promoter of peace and international security, the values of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights. The report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/69/1) over the past year again confirms that cooperation among Member States, based on the principles of the United Nations and in a spirit of solidarity, can meet the current challenges of our peoples.

I would like to address some issues of interest to my country in regard to developments in international relations. Since the General Assembly's general debate a year ago, the area of international security has witnessed the most complex and serious developments since the end of the cold war. In that context, we have a duty to reaffirm our commitment to the principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries, the non-use of force and the peaceful resolution of all problems between States, in accordance with international law.

(*spoke in English*)

One of the crises of utmost concern to my country is the current situation in Ukraine, given its impact on the security of the countries in Eastern Europe. The crisis started, as the Assembly knows, with the unilateral annexation of Crimea, an integral part of the sovereign State of Ukraine. That action on the European continent, unprecedented in recent decades, was followed by an internal conflict in the eastern regions of Ukraine, generated by forces pursuing separatist goals. I wish to reconfirm our clear and firm national position on the crisis in Ukraine. Romania rejects any form of external pressure on States in Eastern Europe with aspirations to achieve integration with Europe. Romania firmly supports the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine and all countries. A strong, united and sovereign Ukraine, committed to its European path and to reforms in the economic and political fields, is in the best interests of Europe and the whole world.

The international community has been involved in finding a solution to the crisis from its beginning. We commend the United Nations for its constant presence in the field and the efforts of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to monitor the day-by-day developments on the ground and to support the whole international effort through its specific mechanisms.

For many years, all countries of Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region have shared and openly declared the common goals of peace and cooperation. But instability and grave security concerns, such as in Ukraine, in Transdnistria, Ossetia and Abkhazia, and now in Donetsk, continue to pose obstacles to those goals. We must condemn aggression. We should not lose trust in the rule of international law. We should not lose faith in the benefits of cooperation, and we should all strive to prevent a spillover of the current crisis. The region has always been a bridge between Central Asia and Europe. At this juncture, we have a historical responsibility to assume, protect and preserve the potential for collaboration, cooperation and development in that part of Europe.

Situated at the crossroads of the Danube and Black Sea regions, as well as serving as a bridge between Northern Europe and the Balkans, Romania is fully aware that regional cooperation is key for ensuring regional stability, for building confidence and for promoting the universal principles and values of the Charter of the United Nations. Joint initiatives on the economy, environment, infrastructure and cross-border cooperation have a long-term impact on all countries in our region. As a European Union member, Romania is an active contributor to the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region, to the Black Sea Synergy and to the South-East European Cooperation Process.

We praise the solidarity expressed by the European Union and transatlantic partners in supporting a sustainable path for democracy and development in the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia, assisting them to freely achieve their European aspirations. It was 75 years ago, based on the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, that parts of Romania and some other independent States were dismantled. We have learned that history must not be an excuse for justifying actions against other countries. On the contrary, our answer to any temptation based on past history is strong support for democratic development, respect for the right to democratically choose one's future, and respect for international law.

I want to state that position clearly, on behalf of my country, as an expression of our democratic identity and responsible conduct in our relations with all our neighbours, and when speaking about the democratic future of all the countries in those regions, including the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia. The desire to turn the extended Black Sea region into an area of peace, stability and prosperity should continue to guide our cooperation. We express our support, one again, for a democratic, secure and stable region, and we encourage our regional and international partners to broaden our solidarity with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia.

A source of concern to all of us is the multiplication of political, security and strategic challenges in the southern neighbourhood of the European Union and in the Middle East. The proliferation of radical Islamist movements and the emergence of new groups, such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham (ISIS), have led to an enhanced terrorist threat. They represent a new breed of terrorism, which threatens to destabilize the entire Middle East and the world. ISIS goes beyond Iraq and Syria, and therefore represents a major challenge to the international order and must be dealt with by all States. We must all stand united and fight terrorism wherever it arises. I want to express my country's firm support for building solidarity in confronting this new challenge.

In the field of development, we believe that the current session of the General Assembly is crucial for the preparation of the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, which will guide our actions in coming decades. As a member of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, Romania made its contribution to that very important process, in accordance with the decisions taken at United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Our national vision of the future goals was adopted by the Government of Romania in December 2013, and we are pleased to see that our areas of interest are reflected in the report of the Open Working Group (see A/67/941). The future development agenda should address poverty eradication and sustainable development, good governance and the rule of law. However, it should also provide a platform for social inclusion and the reduction of unemployment, giving our present and future generations of young people confidence and hope.

The President returned to the Chair.

Over the past year, the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance, especially the number of refugees and internally displaced persons, has grown to unprecedented levels. We commend and support the assistance provided to those persons by the United Nations system in close cooperation with international organizations, non-governmental organizations and international donors. Despite our limited financial resources, we have made efforts to contribute to the process of assisting refugees.

In that respect, I would like to mention the activities of the emergency transit centre in Timisoara, Romania, established by the Romanian Government, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration. The centre, the first of its kind in the world, has proved to be a feasible mechanism offering safety to persons in urgent need of international protection, thereby becoming a practical expression of the human security concept. That contribution reflects the responsible conduct that Romania has always adopted in facing global challenges. We will continue to contribute to international efforts with the same dedication and responsibility as our troops and civil experts have already shown in several areas, such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo, or places in Africa.

(*spoke in French*)

The year 2014 has particular resonance for Romania and brings us closer to our national centennial, which we will celebrate in 2018. In 1989, Romanians chose democracy and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. We encountered difficulties, but our resolve led us to a successful transition.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our firm and continuing commitment to the Organization and the Charter of the United Nations and their governing values and principles. Romania will continue to uphold international law and the principle of the peaceful resolution of conflicts, while promoting human rights in order to achieve prosperity for all.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of Romania for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Victor-Viorel Ponta, Prime Minister of Romania, was escorted from the rostrum.

Address by Mr. Tony Abbott, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by Mr. Tony Abbott, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Mr. Tony Abbott, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, was escorted to the rostrum.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Tony Abbott, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

Mr. Abbott (Australia): In what can seem to be darkening times, I want to begin with a message of hope. Amid all our problems, the murderous rage of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant in Syria and Iraq, Russian aggression in Ukraine, the spread of Ebola in West Africa and the stubborn sluggishness of many economies, let me start with a small but telling illustration of nations working together to serve our common humanity. Last March, at the height of the search for the missing Flight MH-70, I went to the Pearce airbase in Western Australia to thank all the aviators involved. There were personnel from Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and the United States — countries that are accustomed to working together. There were also personnel from China, Japan and Korea — countries whose relations sometimes labour under the weight of historical grievances.

On that occasion, however, the tragedy and a daunting challenge drew out the best in everyone. The Organization was founded on the principle that we should work together for the common good and that, over time, talking together and working together will improve our capacity for living together. Like any institution, the United Nations is an imperfect instrument. Still, it is better than "might is right", and it gives good arguments the best chance to prevail.

Despite faults and failures, the United Nations has worked for peace and progress for nearly 70 years. Australia has been proud to play its part, starting in 1946, when we held the first presidency of the Security Council and helped to draft the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. At the heart of the Organization is the principle that we should act towards others as we would have them act towards us. For almost seven decades, Australia has believed in the potential of the United Nations and supported its work. Keeping commitments, valuing human life, protecting property and extending freedom are universal aspirations, not only Australian ones.

Since 1947, we have provided more than 65,000 personnel to more than 50 multilateral peace and security operations. We are not a country accustomed to turning back, once we have put our hand to the plough. We have had Blue Beret personnel in the Middle East since 1956 and in Cyprus since 1964. When leadership is needed, we step up, as we did in Bougainville, in Timor-Leste and in Solomon Islands. In Korea, Cambodia, Kuwait and Afghanistan and in Somalia, Sierra Leone and other troubled places, Australians have lent a hand under the United Nations banner. We have only 21 personnel in South Sudan now but have conducted an airlift of equipment that has supported a much larger force.

With just 24 million people, Australia is a relatively small country, but we have the world's twelfth-largest economy, with global interests and with some global reach. We are strong enough to be useful but pragmatic enough to know our limits. Under successive Governments, for more than 100 years, Australia's determination has been to advance our interests, to protect our citizens and to uphold our values. We have never believed that we can save the world single-handedly, nor have we shrunk from shouldering our responsibilities. After the 2004 East Asian tsunami, we committed $1 billion to Indonesia. We were one of the first countries to arrive with help in Japan after the 2011 earthquake and in the Philippines after the 2013 typhoon.

To date, we have pledged $8 million towards combating the Ebola outbreak, and dozens of Australian health professionals are working with international agencies in the region. To us, this is all part of being a good global citizen. Last July, we were pleased to sponsor Security Council resolution 2166 (2014) and to work with the Dutch and the Malaysians to investigate the crash site and recover our dead, after Malaysia Airlines Flight MH-17 was shot down by Russian-backed rebels over eastern Ukraine. We are grateful for the help that Ukraine gave us, and are naturally sympathetic to a country struggling to preserve its independence and territorial integrity against a bully. With the Dutch and the Malaysians, we will do everything we can to ensure that the investigation is not undermined, and that the crime is not covered up, because that is our duty to the 38 Australians murdered in this atrocity.

Right now, an Australian force has been deployed to the Middle East, so that we can join a coalition seeking to disrupt and degrade the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant terrorist movement at the request of the Iraqi Government. One of our prime ministers once talked about our country's great objective, "our light on the hill," as he put it, namely, to work for the betterment of mankind, not just at home, but wherever we can lend a helping hand. To build a better world, we need to respond sensibly to the problems before us, whether through bodies such as the United Nations, or in coalitions with like-minded countries. We also need to work purposefully to create stronger and more resilient people and communities. A stronger economy will not solve every problem, but it will make almost every problem easier to tackle. Richer people are not necessarily better people, but the problems of plenty are invariably easier to deal with than those of want.

As this year's Chair of the Group of Twenty (G-20), Australia is determined to promote private-sector-led growth: growth, because that is the best way to generate jobs and improve everyone's quality of life; private-sector-led, because profitable, private businesses are the best source of real, sustainable wealth. Freer trade, more investment in infrastructure, a modern and fair international tax system, stronger global economic institutions and a more resilient financial sector are all parts of our G-20 agenda to strengthen the world economy.

Rather than preaching, we are trying to lead by example. Australia has abolished the carbon tax and the mining tax, and we have provided environmental approvals for $800 billion worth of new projects. We have also begun the task of eliminating our budget deficit within four years. We have finalized a series of trade deals, because every time a country trades with another, wealth increases, and when wealth increases, countries grow stronger. Our G-20 goal is to boost output by an extra 2 per cent over the next five years to create millions of jobs and to generate trillions in wealth right around the world.

Likewise, the post-2015 development agenda should also focus on economic growth, because growth makes every other social goal, even tackling climate change, easier to accomplish. To people who do not know where their next meal is coming from, talk of economic growth can seem ignorant or indulgent. But "economic growth" is really just economists' shorthand for more jobs, higher pay, new industries and the better life that only greater wealth can provide. Economic growth might seem a mundane vision, but it allows millions more people to create their own vision of how their lives can be better.

To anyone who doubts that stronger economic growth can be achieved, I say, "Look at the countries of East Asia". In scarcely two generations, the rise of Asia has driven the greatest social and economic transformation in history. People live longer, they are better educated, wealthier and, yes, they enjoy a level of freedom and stability that their parents could only dream of. In Japan, Korea and now China, in India and increasingly in Indonesia, many hundreds of millions of people have been lifted from poverty to the middle class. Almost certainly, that is the greatest and fastest advance in human welfare of all time.

While all Governments, Australia's included, could always be better, smarter and more compassionate, no one should be blind to the great progress that has occurred. We live in the most remarkable age in human history. For all the work that remains to be done, we have seen more change for the better than at any other time.

As the General Assembly session meets with such pressing issues before it, our challenge — as always — is to realize our best hopes and to be our best selves. Australians have two defining characteristics: we believe in a "fair go", because innate decency demands that every person have a chance to contribute. We also believe in "having a go", because rolling up your sleeves will always produce a better result than standing on the sidelines complaining. That readiness to make an effort for a good cause is why Australia feels so comfortable in this body and is so ready to contribute to its work. We should put no limits on what we can achieve, especially when we work together, trust people and are faithful to our deepest values.

Every country counts. Every argument must be weighed. Every person has equal rights and dignity. Every person deserves respect. All people are entitled to make their own choices — provided they do not infringe on the rights of others. Those are the principles that this Organization embodies and on which the future of humanity rests.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Tony Abbott, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, was escorted from the rostrum.

The meeting rose at 3.20 p.m.